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# STUDIES IN MODERN GERMAN LITERATURE

SUDERMANN · HAUPTMANN · WOMEN WRITERS OF  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

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TO

M. S. H.

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED



## PREFACE

The reader of these studies will be likely to feel a certain disappointment at finding them distinctly unscholastic in form as well as in substance. Yet a frank declaration of the author's aim may vindicate him in the judgment even of those who have themselves dealt with similar subjects in a more academic fashion. His cardinal purpose has been to draw attention afresh to a phase of contemporary culture thus far not sufficiently heeded by the English-speaking world. He has written with the hope of coöperating, in however modest a measure, with abler and better known writers who are striving to bring the German and the American into more genuine sympathy with each other.

The usual way of revealing the spirit and temper of a people through their literature is by an interpretative survey of the entire output. This course, if applied to modern literatures, involves the application of historical method to present-day things and persons. Many critics have deemed their powers adequate to grapple with such an enormous difficulty. But although they have had the advantage of an already well-informed reading public, their performances, as a rule, have fallen so far short of their aims that a less self-assured reviewer shrinks from the undertaking. With the exception of one or

two brilliant achievements, the existing works of the sort render at most the limited service of *catalogues raisonnés*, — arranging the facts with different degrees of reliability, and tracing with more or less fallibility the general drift of modern, or, better, recent, literature. For an alien reader, unacquainted with the material under discussion, they are ill adapted. The novice naturally enough is much more interested in the æsthetic and ethical maxims of leading individuals and their concrete works than in any abstract creeds and doctrines of the schools. But the “history” of literature, or even of single literary periods, necessarily depends for the characterization of eminent writers upon condensed synopses and brief and usually dogmatic estimates, while for the expounding of the sociological bases from which literary currents ever spring, it must fall back on comment which for the greater part lies beyond the ken of all but the specialist.

Withal the historical method in this field of work is hardly safer from the danger of subjective treatment than is a more frankly “impressionistic” form of criticism. So soon as the “general” reader turns for confirmation of its verdicts to the full bench of critical authority, he is confused by a diversity of opinion which extends even to the estimates of the master spirits of the age. Like less imposing mortals, the historiographer of contemporary events cannot get away from his own shadow.

The author of this book, not unconscious of the subjective warp in his own judgment, has considered it more to his purpose to show in a series of unconstrained monographs the chief aspects of modern German literature than to construct a general guidebook for that subject. By dint of detailed analysis he has sought to convey the gist of the two leading writers even to such of his readers as might be debarred from first-hand acquaintance with them.

Just why Hauptmann and Sudermann were chosen to represent the modern tendencies in the drama and in fiction is stated fully in the early part of the first sketch. The paper on Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century, although broader in scope and consequently less intensive in treatment, was joined to those on Sudermann and Hauptmann for the simple reason that it seemed practical to select out of the fullness of the available material just those topics which for people outside of Germany possess the keenest actuality. Should this beginning prove not altogether abortive, it is the author's intention to follow up the present volume with further groups of studies, and he even hopes by this means to round out, less unmethodically than would appear at first blush, the story of the growth, ascendancy, and, if signs may be believed, the decline, of naturalism in German literature under the new Empire.

As for the style, or, should that be a misnomer, the linguistic make-up, of these studies, the author, alas,

may not appease the sternly disposed among his readers with rueful promises of future improvement. Yet the much-tried leniency extended to writers, whether alien born or not, by a public with whom this form of generosity amounts almost to a national fault, relieves him of the need for prolonged apology.

OTTO HELLER

MAY, 1905

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MODERN  
GERMAN LITERATURE

HERMANN SUDERMANN



## HERMANN SUDERMANN

It is a striking coincidence that the most significant figures in the history of German literature have appeared upon the scene two by two. As far back as the ninth century we find side by side as its greatest poetic monuments two religious epopees of almost equal importance, the *Heliand* and the *Evangelienbuch*; among the popular epics of the Hohenstaufen times the German Iliad, the *Nibelungenlied*, is matched off by the *Lay of Kudrun* as by a German Odyssey; and among the chivalric poems of the same period the pre-eminent works of Wolfram von Eschenbach and Gottfried von Strassburg lend expression to diametrically opposite views of life.

After the literary life had lain in catalepsy for many generations it was reawakened in the eighteenth century through apparently antipodal forces which may perhaps be most fitly brought to mind by the mention of Klopstock and Lessing. Then the dazzling flood of light and life which at the close of that century suffused the culture of Germany was shed from the twin luminaries Goethe

and Schiller. For the people, even to-day the name of Goethe hardly enjoys the same lonely eminence in German letters as does Homer's in Greek or Shakespeare's in English literature. Although in the ensuing century the catalogue of the *poetae Germaniae* grew to an unexampled magnitude, its best known names at successive periods stood in contrasted couples: Kleist and Körner, Uhland and Hauff, Heine and Lenau, Geibel and Freiligrath, Grillparzer and Hebbel, Reuter and Schefel, Freytag and Keller, Heyse and Spielhagen, Wilbrandt and Wildenbruch, Marlitt and Werner, and, if the truth must be confessed, Hackländer and Gerstäcker. We are therefore not surprised to find ourselves once more contrasting two leaders — this time within the *Moderne*. Now that the new school has issued from its turbulent infancy it has become legitimate for us to ask: What have these new writers done for German literature, — in what have they enriched the national art and culture? To the great mass of the people the literature of the post-Bismarckian era seems epitomized in two names, — Gerhart Hauptmann and Hermann Sudermann, for undeniably these two have exercised the greatest formative influence on contemporaneous German letters.

Literary criticism, ever inclined to juxtaposition and antithesis, has quickly adopted the dualism of the public taste in its attitude toward Sudermann and Hauptmann.

To trace out the artistic and intellectual growth of these two leading spirits as manifest in their works is an attractive and instructive task. To be sure, their careers show in the main features a certain external similarity, a similarity which has been strikingly emphasized through the circumstance that they have been simultaneously swept onward to the very pinnacle of fame. Yet though their great successes have very nearly tallied in point of time and measure, one can scarcely imagine two more dissimilar natures. Scherer's ingenious but somewhat strained theory which accounts for the main tendencies of German literature through the underlying competition of rival forces, a masculine and a feminine, is well illustrated in these two writers. Hauptmann, high-strung, responding with nervous sensibility to the mildest stimulus, is possessed of a reproductive, feminine talent, a talent raised, to be sure, to the power of genius; whereas Sudermann is a robust masculine personality made of coarser stuff, not subtle enough to penetrate the inmost privacies

of the human heart. Withal he is not the lesser artist, for to offset Hauptmann's fineness of perception he has the advantage of a stout self-confidence and broad knowledge of the inner and outer facts of life.

The fame of Hermann Sudermann is no longer confined to his own country, since most of his novels have been translated into several languages and a number of his plays performed in the more dignified theaters on both sides of the Atlantic. His successes, won in the face of a determined opposition both from the old school of writers and the new,—since neither will acknowledge Sudermann as of their own,—have been phenomenal, and, if the question can be decided by the evidence of publishers' and library statistics and the frequency of Sudermann's plays in the repertory of leading theaters, it may be safely assumed that his present great popularity is in no danger of decline in the near future. This popularity is unquestionably connected with the fact that in each of his works a living issue is sharply defined. Sudermann is above all things a writer with a distinct pedagogical task to which he brings a complete intellectual and moral equipment. His bold and positive utterances have awakened a ringing echo, because

they have imperatively called the attention of the world to social and intellectual undercurrents of extraordinary persistency and unknown power.

To determine one's attitude toward the upsetting doctrine preached by Sudermann, with the approval of a large portion of the best lettered and intellectually most fastidious of living nations, would seem to be almost a duty for the thoughtful. If the code of ethics he accepts and proclaims is asserted with justice to be a source of peril to the vested social order that most of us would defend, is it not the part of wisdom to measure the danger by looking the enemy manfully in the face? New thoughts are not killed off when fine indignation virtuously conspires to smother them in their cradle. In a free country it is worth while to examine new teachings. As for those of Sudermann, most Americans will gasp at their import and unhesitatingly reject them, yet few readers, if they study his books to a purpose, will refuse their respect to the sincerity and moral earnestness of the man.

It shall be the aim of this chapter to discuss the works thus far produced by Hermann Sudermann, —to review their chief contents and trace out their ethics, marking with heavier lines those features

which have divided the opinion of the German public. But since a fruit of experience is caution, the execution of this plan needs to be preceded by a word of explanation. People often do the critic the unintentional honor of holding him accountable for the views of the eminent writers whom he expounds, only because, out of sheer respect for his readers as well as his subject, he modestly abstains from the promulgation of any personal theory of life that he may hold. To all eventual charges of heresy and sedition the defense therefore enters a general plea of "not guilty."

The writer does not pose as Hermann Sudermann nor as his keeper. He does not necessarily champion Sudermann's ethics simply because he does not consider it his business forever to make war upon them. It is enough for him to sound this rich personality, to communicate its message, and to furnish thereby, if he may allow himself the hope, some food for serious reflection.

The German people have displayed in their literature as a whole a certain severity of temper. Where this literature runs in a humorous vein it passes easily into rough persiflage and cutting satire. Satire is the dominant note not only in the bulky controversial literature of the sixteenth

century but also in a not inconsiderable portion of the classic writings of the eighteenth. Lessing's critical activity, sublimely constructive though it is, is pervaded by rankling animosity against every form of intellectual sloth and artistic barrenness. The youthful Goethe directs his boyishly harsh censure against the prevailing vices of philistinism and hypocrisy. Schiller, in his youth still more vehement than either of his two great predecessors, hurls boulderlike invective against the existing political and social order of things. The Romantics, priding themselves on their greater delicacy of feeling, seek to refine satire into the gentler art of irony. But even among them it never dies out in its poignant form. In the period of reaction "Young Germany" resorts to merciless scorn as the only weapon available against despotism. Ludwig Börne and Heinrich Heine are the greatest satirists of "Young Germany." They deal havoc differently, —the shafts of Börne's sarcasm hit and pierce, while those of Heine's touch and poison. Later on Friedrich Theodor Vischer, the famous writer on æsthetics, subjects his German countrymen to Aristophanic censure in his *Faust, the Third Part of the Tragedy*. And that entire faction

who are commonly designated as "Youngest Germany," or *Die Moderne*, are fain, in order it may be to facilitate their analysis, to saturate the actualities of modern life with a corrosive mockery. Although a certain realism usually serves as the basis of satire, it is the nature of satire to overstep the literal truth. In order to show up a thing as deserving our contempt or ridicule authors present a distorted picture of it. Thus the realism which obtains in caricature is one which depends less on correspondence to facts than on suggestive association. The satirist, be his love of truth never so great, seeks not to present things just as they really appear to him from without, but to draw a convincing likeness of that which they suggest to his inward experience. This object he achieves by exaggerating or overaccentuating their sinister or mean aspects. He retouches the picture of reality, but never for the purpose of embellishment or idealization. These distinctions it is necessary to hold fast in order to understand why the most distinguished living satirist, — Hermann Sudermann, — although he has been so often called modern from top to toe, is at most a half-hearted "realist." He does not conform to the naturalist's supreme

demand that the writer must not permit his personality, and above all things his philosophy, to shine through his work. On the contrary, it is not at all difficult to get a satisfying glimpse of the man Sudermann through the medium of his writings. He is a typical modern man, city bred, sagacious, and sophisticated to a degree, knowing the world so thoroughly that few things in it can baffle, puzzle, or even surprise him. Such, I think, is the first impression formed of him. Next we observe the open-mindedness of the man, the broad liberality of his sympathies. Soon we discover that his cosmopolitanism has in no way denationalized him or, as is apt to be the case, made him an utter worldling. For with his world-citizenship is coupled a strong family feeling for the German land and people and a deep religious sense. Sudermann, in these days of national self-assertion and spiritual path-seeking, is neither a scoffer nor an indifferent. His skepticism does not assail any noble human ideals, for by these he is himself deeply inspired; but he is distrustful of men's motives, and especially of the stereotyped moral notions unthinkingly accepted by one generation from the other. Morality — one may so interpret Sudermann —

must be earned, not inherited; personally differentiated, not typified. How a person wins or loses his moral salvation is the problem whose fascination sets Sudermann to work, for, although a doubter by temperament, he clearly perceives in human nature latent moral forces which if set free will let it rise above the stale, warmed-over morality of workaday life. It follows naturally that a writer of this temper should be concerned with a dual purpose,—rudely to shake the decaying structure of social morality now resting largely on hollow conventions and compromises, but at the same time to stay the total collapse of society and invigorate it with his own sustaining aspirations. As his attempts toward these ends are not wholly free from theatricalities, the unthinking complaint that Sudermann is a *poseur* has passed into the stock in trade of contemporary criticism. He does not parade his personality, he is simply not quite artist enough always to hide it. To be sure, a few of his characters, notably Count Trast in *Die Ehre*, have a strong affinity with Sudermann himself. Yet they were never intended for self-portraits. In fact, not caring to admit the throng into his intimacy, he rather barricades himself defiantly behind his works. From this

position he falls savagely upon that painted, slinking, day-shunning society which for him is the object of deep detestation and drags it from the privacy of its nocturnal haunts into the pitiless glare of the sunlit street. Sudermann, then, is and can be no dreamy minstrel nor yet an utterer of the "lyric cry." He is a calculating man of action, a self-conscious altruist agitated by deepest sympathy for all souls that are in distress and by implacable hatred of every form of tyranny. Fortunately this determined judge and resolute avenger is also an artist of uncommon power. His plays belong probably, his novels beyond a doubt, to the best that German literature has to show in these genres.

Before Hermann Sudermann leaped into fame through the performance of *Die Ehre* (at the Lessing Theater in Berlin, November 27, 1889) he had struggled with hardships in obscurity, supporting himself variously as a private tutor, journalist, and story-writer for — family magazines! He was born in 1857, the son of a brewer in a small village of East Prussia, where brewers are not *ex officio* millionaires. Sudermann's father, in greatly straitened circumstances, contrived to maintain the talented boy at school with a brief interruption,

during which the fourteen-year-old Hermann shared by force of poverty the early fate of Ibsen and Fontane in being apprenticed to an apothecary. Returning to his books, Sudermann was graduated from the Gymnasium at Tilsit, and then undertook work in philology and history at the University of Königsberg. In 1877 he came to Berlin to continue his studies and has since then made the Prussian capital his permanent home. His importance as a leader in the modern literary movement dates properly from the year 1887, when, besides a collection of short stories entitled *Im Zwielicht* ("In the Gloaming"), he produced his first work of real significance, the novel *Frau Sorge* ("Dame Care"), which revealed him at once as a writer of exceptional force and skill and also as a mature philosopher.

"Dame Care" is a somber book. The hero is a man who has led a joyless existence. He has never been young, since upon his early childhood wretched parental strife had sprinkled its poisoning mildew. The beginning reads not very unlike Reuter's great book, *Ut mine Stromtid*; but how different is Reuter's noble portrait of Carl Havermann from the picture drawn of Paul Mayhöfer's father, the East Prussian squire, who,

uprooted from his easy mode of life, thenceforth spins out his days in apathetic stupor! Young Paul, who assumes all the obligations of his bankrupt father, is not only borne down with the weight of excessive exertions, but burdened also with the still heavier responsibility for the moral safety of his family. After the death of his mother no ray of light ever pierces the veil which, woven by Dame Care, is drawing closer and closer round the slow, shy, and rather unwinsome boy. Cheerlessly, almost mechanically, he performs his monotonous work, in order to provide comfort for the father now sinking into dotage and the reckless twin sisters. Success crowns Paul's labors; but no sooner has the lost credit of his name been recovered through untiring labor than it is again disgraced in a still more painful manner. To repair the damaged honor of his sisters is a sacred debt which Paul owes to the memory of his mother. After summoning up in vain the full measure of his moral heroism for an appeal to the seducers, he intimidates the cowards with a brutal threat and forces them to make good their promises of marriage. But after this one resolute, blood-cleansing deed he relapses into dull, ox-like resignation. His business prospers more and

more, but to no purpose, since now the sisters are married, and Paul is no longer buoyed up by his guardianship. He is enslaved by a false, a cheerless conception of life. It must be said that the road by which he ultimately reaches liberty takes a most incongruous course, for it leads through the penitentiary. In order to preserve the property of a neighbor from the incendiary hands of his degenerate father, Paul sets his own premises on fire, and having thus reduced himself to poverty, he must in addition atone for his act by two years of penal servitude. When at last he steps from his prison the love of a true woman awaits him at the gates, seeking him out with a happiness that he had been too awkward to pursue. This solution of the psychologic problem is not satisfying because it does not appear as inevitable. From the gray web of Phantom Care why did not Paul extricate himself for good, when, pistol in hand, he set his face against the defilers of his home? Sundry other technical objections might be raised against Sudermann's first famous novel; but in spite of its faults, *Frau Sorge* is among the noblest works of modern German fiction. This is not saying that it is a book to be recommended without caution. As a keen and

fearless scrutinizer, Sudermann naturally draws into the sphere of his novels some discussions not intended for the ears of the "young miss," or of her worthy progenitor utterly indisposed to endure in fiction the undeniable facts of life. The careful parent does not always remember that the young person in question has already a considerable library of her own. Sudermann is not a competitor of Mmes. Wildermuth, Polko, and Heimbürg in Germany, or in America of the manufacturers of such brummagem historical fiction as *Richard Carvel* and *The Crisis*, or in England of the writers of such unliterary trash as *The Prisoner of Zenda*. Of this, new evidence is furnished in *Die Geschwister* ("Brothers and Sisters"), two tales published in 1888, in both of which the same problem is handled. In the first story, *Geschichte einer stillen Mühle* ("History of a Lonely Mill"), one brother loves the wife of the other. The tragedy is heightened by the deep attachment the wrongdoer feels for the wronged, and it ends with their common death. The second story deals with the growing passion of a girl for her sister's husband; for one moment she gives room to a wish for the invalid sister's death, and for this platonic crime she voluntarily pays with

her own life. The right of untrammelled liberty, it will be noticed, is not asserted. The moral code is sustained by the tragic issue as firmly as in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, to which the story bears a certain inner resemblance. But no insipid matrimonial amity is preached when the ill-starred heroine Olga speaks in defiance of the convention as follows: "I should love differently from you two; I should not be faint-hearted; I should not sneak away as you do saying, 'T is better thus.' I should subdue her with the fire of my soul, vanquish her with the strength of my arms. I should snatch her to my breast and carry her off, no matter whither, out into the night, into the desert, if no sun were willing to shine for us, no house to offer its shelter. I would rather starve with her by the roadside than ask the slightest favor of the world that would separate us. This is what I should do if I were you, Robert. And if I were she, I should throw myself on your breast laughing, and say, 'Come, I will beg for you when you are without bread, my lap shall be your couch when you are without a bed, your wounds I will bathe with my tears, a thousand deaths I will suffer for you and thank the Lord that He permits me.' See, Robert, this is my idea of love."

Reserving Sudermann's epoch-marking play *Die Ehre* ("Honor") for discussion in connection with the other dramas, we turn to his next novel.

*Der Katzensteg* (in the English translation "Regina") (1889) is a great book in nearly every sense. Among its many distinctive merits it teaches us to appreciate a profound historic sense in this true son of the modern era. The action is laid in the year 1814. With a distrustful eye Sudermann subjects that glorious chapter of German history to a thorough scrutiny. Unbribed by the verdict of patriotic tradition or by his own strong instinctive love of his country, he scans the records of the past. And he finds his misgivings confirmed. A sad disillusionment indeed, and a heavy blow for many a patriotic soul. "That year," — he says, as a result of his unprejudiced investigation, — "that year whose name rings in the ears of us children of a later day like one grand harmony woven of pæans, organ peals, and the clanging of bells, witnessed more violence and crime than any other year before or since."

As has been said, the tragedy is brought to a head in the glorious year 1814, but it was engendered fully seven years before. In 1807 Napoleon

had subdued Prussia; the Baron von Schranden, a Prussian nobleman who from his mother's breast had imbibed Polish sympathies, now seeing in the rising star of Bonaparte a gleam of hope for his beloved Poland, at the prompting of this hope becomes guilty of high treason. A French detachment being quartered in his castle, Schranden forces the fifteen-year-old Regina Hackelberg, as an obedient tool of his felony, to guide the French troops over the so-called *Katzensteg* ("cat's trail") up to the rear of the Prussians. These, suddenly attacked, are massacred to a man. When the facts come out, a savage wrath rises up against the baron. His castle is stormed and burned by the furious peasants. On his crumbling manor he lives henceforth in dismal isolation. Mantraps and spring guns barely safeguard his life; from all communion with men he is banished. He is an outlawed man. Nobody will or dares work for him, and his estates are of no use to him. But two more victims are doomed through his crime: Regina, who remains with the baron, his drudge and mistress, and Schranden's son Boleslav, at school in Königsberg, who finds himself suddenly avoided by all his associates. He leaves the school as soon as he learns the reason, and under

an assumed name enters the corps of Lützow's famous volunteers in the warfare against the French. But the curse has fastened itself to him. The arrival of a former chum causes him to decamp for fear of discovery. He next joins a militia regiment, is wounded in a most hazardous war adventure, held prisoner, and at last, when peace has been made, returns to his home. At this point begins the story of Regina. Boleslav's father has just died, and the villagers refuse decent burial to his body. Arriving on the scene, Boleslav finds Regina in the act of digging a grave. Schooled in rigid self-discipline, and in his misfortune upheld by unflinching self-respect and a lofty sense of duty, he sees in Regina only the vile accomplice of the wretch for whom he has come to perform the last filial office. He accordingly treats her with rude contempt. His comrades in arms have come at his call to help him inter his father, but they leave him in ominous silence as soon as the business is over. Then Boleslav is brought face to face with the awfulness of his future fate: "And his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." While waiting to decide about his future, he tolerates Regina and allows her to minister to his

wants, which she does with a brutelike attachment. Soon touched by her supreme self-oblivion, he feels himself more and more attracted by the native charm of the strange creature, who through self-surrendering obedience was beguiled into shame and crime in early years, and yet has preserved intact her truest character, unswerving loyalty and chaste dignity. Quelling his wakening passion for her, Boleslav throws himself into his work. Intrepid he stands, in single-handed defiance of the patriotic mob. Patriots indeed they who show their teeth and foam at the mouth in their frantic eagerness to punish the third, nay even the fourth, generation for every affront offered their hollow idols! A true hero, he routs the cowardly pack, and strives and strains and slaves to win back his own in the teeth of persecution, until the blast of the war trumpet is heard once more. Without a moment's hesitation, as though it were the only natural course of action, he throws to the winds the fruit of his herculean efforts, responds to the call of his country, and after burying Regina, who has laid down her life for his, dies an obscure but glorious death for his fatherland.

It is readily seen, even from this bare outline, that *Der Katzensteg* is strongly touched up with

romantic tints; a fuller study would make it equally evident that in spite of the thrilling interest in the story as such, and the gusto with which the figures and their setting are treated on their own account, *Der Katzensteg* is also a vigorous sermon, as all of Sudermann's books are in their last analysis. The theme of this sermon is patriotism, true and false. Only once again, in the one-act play *Teja*, does Sudermann glorify the genuine patriotic spirit. There, as in *Der Katzensteg*, patriotism appears but as a necessary phase of the categorical imperative which dictates the conduct of the hero. What greater contrast could be imagined than that between Boleslav, who, martyred by the gross injustice of society, upholds and defends the sacredness of his manly duties towards that same society, and Hauptmann's self-seeking, self-losing Master Heinrich, who sacrifices all society, even his own family, to the chimera of a duty towards himself or his fancied genius.

Sudermann's next novel is neither romantic nor is it a "novel with a purpose." The breezy story of *Iolanthes Hochzeit* ("The Wedding of Iolanthe") (1892) is generally underrated, largely because narrative art is not in itself sufficiently

appreciated by Germans (nor, for the matter of that, by Americans). Readers are apt to value a story wholly for the incident; and in this respect *Iolanthes Hochzeit* does not offer anything that is striking. It tells how a grim old bachelor makes a belated and abortive attempt at matrimony. He is no sooner married than he is so panic-stricken at the changed aspect of life that on the evening of his wedding day he solemnly betroths his newly acquired wife to the other man in the case; and then he rubs his hands in Mephistophelian glee over his singular disencumberment from the roseate chains so irksome in the very anticipation. Surely the plot is slight. Yet Sudermann has succeeded in fashioning out of the meager story a cabinet piece of vernacular art worthy of a Fritz Reuter. The right note has been happily struck from the first and it is sustained to the end. The story is fairly redolent with the racy savor of provincial life in the north of Germany. Sudermann has never been excelled in his portraiture of the most singular product of East Prussia; I mean the *Krautjunker* or country squire, a puzzling mixture of thick-headedness and jovial humor, generosity and crude bigotry, caste conceit and patriotic devotion, materialism and stanch

belief in ideals. This novel fully reveals along with Sudermann's well-known critical tendency the dramatic bent of his narrative. Somewhat surprising from this master of scathing sarcasm is the subtle irony that hovers over the narrative like an ethereal gauze.

In judging of Sudermann's next novel, *Es War* ("Once upon a Time") (1894), which in some respects is inferior to "Dame Care" and "Regina," it ought to be remembered that it was written fully ten years before publication. It too, nevertheless, gives ample evidence of the author's extraordinary faculties and forces, which have contributed in equal shares to its excellence. For the better understanding of the book, a limitation needs now to be put on the statement that Sudermann is a pessimist. Pessimism appears plainly enough in his analysis and diagnosis of things, yet far is it from him to look into the future through smoke-bedimmed spectacles. He does not view the moral attainments of the living generation with contentment. But his belief in the transmission of character is not that of the determinist, and he does not believe unconditionally in the power of the past over the future. A guilt committed cannot be undone, to be sure,

yet a strong will may come out victorious in the fight with the threatening consequences of past error. This, however, cannot be through remorse, so Sudermann teaches. Like Nietzsche, he casts sterile repentance overboard. The world can be moved not by tears but by deeds. Only it is needful—and this is the central lesson of the novel *Es War*—that a man break with his guilty past irrevocably by unqualified, fearless, and unsparing avowal. In *Es lebe das Leben* ("The Joy of Living"), act iii, scene vii, Richard, in his perplexity, exclaims: "Ah, Beate! Truth, Truth! To be once more at peace with oneself! For the bare privilege of having a conviction I would throw down joyfully everything, my paltry private existence, my life—everything." A man must make a clean sweep of his past if he would recover the mastery of his fate. Not until the hero of *Es War* learns to understand this can he redeem himself, make good the past as far as that is ever possible, and become again an active man. Leo Sellenthin is one of those broad-chested giants, ruthlessly egoistic and full of go, whom we meet frequently in Sudermann's works. An affair of honor in which his part has been that of the doubly guilty offender and slayer takes him

to America, whence he is drawn back by the characteristic attachment of the East Elbian to his native heath. At home again, he meets the companion of his past wrong, now the wife of his most devoted friend. Leo himself is responsible for the ill-fated union, for when Felicitas' present husband, disquieted by rumors, once put the direct question, Leo lied away his liaison with her. Now he is lured back by the unprincipled wretch, loses his poise and self-respect entirely, and, in his own words, is fast going "to the dogs," till finally the woman, exasperated at his resolve that they shall die together, precipitates an explanation between Leo and her wronged husband. The issue does not result in the usual exchange of pistol formalities so gratifying to the logic of the habitual novel reader, for Ulrich, with a magnanimity quite unbecoming a German gentleman and an officer, pardons his "friend." On the German Becky Sharp's fair shoulders falls all the punishment, whereas Leo strides out afresh into a future promiscuous of fortune and love. To our ethical conceptions the end is far from satisfying, but Sudermann — and this dogmatism constitutes one of his weaknesses — is bound to prove a thesis. His characters may fitly be divided into two

classes: the active or potent, and the passive or impotent, — the driving and the drifting. To the former goes out the writer's approval, regardless of fine moral distinctions; to the latter, his sympathy, pity, blame, or contempt. In order to compel Sudermann's respect a man must, above all things, possess an imperturbable individuality, an ego of his own making. There is at least nothing mysterious, nothing unpractical, in this robust doctrine.

The same idea is preached in Sudermann's plays even more emphatically and drastically than in his novels. Most of these plays are social plays, even as the novels were social novels. With fists of iron they hammer at the bars of the protecting fence which the old use-and-wont of society has drawn round its ancient structure. If in *Frau Sorge* and in *Es War* the great satirist has wielded a scourge, he chastens with scorpions in *Die Ehre* ("Honor"), in *Heimat* (called in the English translation "Magda"), and in *Sodoms Ende* ("The Destruction of Sodom"). In turning our interest to these and the other problem plays, let us bear in mind that behind the dramatis personæ in them stand living social questions of our time. To show the common ground from which

the conflicts spring in his dramas, the means by which they are driven to a climax, and, lastly, the method by which they reach solution, is the purpose of the following epitome of Sudermann's social philosophy. Sudermann sees in human society not a firm conglomerate, but rather, as it were, a stratified formation of which each layer is a separate world in miniature. To him the eternal warfare of human interests is thus a struggle between contiguous strata of society. Whether the war be waged between the aristocracy and the middle class, or between the propertied class and the proletariat, or whether the parties to the conflict be the employer and the employed, the producer and the middleman, the soldier and the civilian, or lastly, to use a term become famous through Sudermann, the front-house folk and the rear-house folk, there is, in all these cases, a necessary contact of some sort which causes friction. The insularity of the social groups is even greater than this fact alone would explain. For each caste in its intimate soul life stands solitary, not only over against the adjacent, but over against every other caste. It cannot understand the others and is not understood by them. It is perfectly true, as the veteran novelist

Spielhagen urges, that this is not a new discovery; but who before Sudermann had ever clearly made it the thesis of a play?

Now it often happens that an exceptional individual in the course of developing his superior gifts steps beyond the circle assigned him by the accident of birth. Woe betide such a man if the severance of the ties that hold him to his native circle be incomplete, if by a sense of duty and piety he retain allegiance to the narrower province, and if habit and family affection stay the hand that would burst its own shackles! To conclude from these premises that Sudermann's warning finger points the way back for him who has strayed from his home would be misinterpreting his central lesson. On the contrary, he urges *déclassés* of this sort unmistakably to the path that leads to freedom. In his earlier works, at least, he cares more for the individual than for the social group; and his favorite hero seems to be the person who fights for the higher place for which he is fitted.

The drift of Sudermann's first drama, *Die Ehre* ("Honor") (1890; performed November, 1889), which brought him sudden fame, opposes the common sentiment that honor is a supreme ideal possession in which all men can share; more in

particular, the play goes to refute the prevalent German notions upon the subject of personal honor. Count Trast, the counseling friend of the leading character, who would drive out that phantom and have men's conduct ruled instead by a high sense of justice, probably articulates the author's ethics in branding conventional honor as one of the conventional lies. It is perhaps not without a deep significance that on the stage the distinguished cosmopolite bears a marked external resemblance to the author. At any rate, Trast is not really and seriously bound up with the plot, and serves in the main only to promulgate the above-sketched philosophy, which task he accomplishes by a flow of eloquence richly besprinkled with bonmots. Our sympathies are won, in greater measure even than by his rôle as Robert Heinecke's mentor, by the precious manner in which he plays havoc with the vacuous Kurt Mühlingk and his boon companions, and at no stage is he so sure of our applause as when amid sardonic laughter he rakes the fashionable young libertines over the undying coals of his satire. Throughout the play Trast creates the impression that the playwright himself has in this thin disguise mounted the stage and is moving with characteristic aplomb

among his own creatures. This importance of Count Trast as the exponent of Sudermann's philosophy makes it proper, though he is not the hero, to speak of him before all the other characters of *Die Ehre*. When a mere stripling of a lieutenant he was discharged *mit schlichtem Abschied*, i.e. he left the regiment under a cloud. The reason was a by no means uncommon one. The trouble had grown out of his inability to pay a gambling debt on short order, but the real crime was that he declined the brotherly invitation to make use of a loaded pistol which a committee of his fellow-officers had generously provided for his suicide. Now after a lapse of time he comes back, an Indian "coffee king" of vast wealth and commercial influence. The trifling debt of ninety thousand thalers he has long ago discharged, without in the slightest degree reinstating himself in the good graces of his own father, much less rehabilitating himself with the exclusive coterie to which he formerly belonged. A checkered experience has taught him not only to look beyond the restricted horizons of his former and his present social positions, but also to shake himself free of every class prejudice whatsoever. He is a completed *Lebenskünstler*,

a past master in the art of living, a man who, like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, has at last learned to shape circumstances to his own needs instead of allowing himself to be shaped by them, has learned to be the hammer rather than the anvil in the forge of life. In the portrayal of this imposing personage Sudermann furnishes proof that with all his congenital love for his fatherland he is in truth a citizen of that larger home which is not defined on the map with colored inks. This is revealed in Trast's rare freedom from the provincialism which insistently crops out in Germans in ever so many little ways, even if they have traveled. / Trast is first and last a man of the world, equally at his ease with the German merchant and the Indian Rajah, in the London club and the continental Casino, amid the gayety of the Latin Quarter of Paris and the busy hubbub of downtown New York. It has been stated that before justice this man bows as to his ruling power; he recognizes no other moral law. Naturally he makes strong enemies. But he is callously indifferent to public opinion. As a rule he is let alone, because he keeps disagreeable persons at a distance with a tone and gesture which he holds in reserve for the purpose. For the rest he has perfect

polish and self-control, is proud but not arrogant, always disposed to be considerate, but prone to vent his sarcasm, which is cutting and slightly cynical.

Under the tutelage of this well-balanced man, Robert Heinecke, the youthful hero of the play, has progressed considerably in worldly knowledge, though he still lacks the poise that is needed in his predicament. Sprung from very lowly stock, he has raised himself through signal ability and perseverance, not without the aid of favoring fortune, to an important mercantile position. After many years of tireless work in the service of his former benefactor Kommerzienrat Mühlingk, Robert has just returned to Berlin from the Indian branch of the firm. Through all these years abroad how deeply has he yearned for his parents and sisters! On arriving, however, he feels at once, though he is slow to admit it to himself, that he has become unused to the spiritual atmosphere of his domestic circle. The chasm between Robert and his family is plainly hinted, in a cleverly casual way, through an episode in the first act. A manservant of the Mühlingks, who reside in the front-house (the Heineckes are living in the rear), has assumed a tone of insolent familiarity in delivering a message to young Heinecke. Robert's mother

invites the messenger to sit down with them: "Won't you eat a piece of coffee-cake with us, William? There is some left."

*Robert*: Pardon, mother (*he hands him a coin*); the man has his pay. Say to the Herr Kommerzienrat that I hope he will do me the honor of receiving me at one o'clock. I shall call at that hour with the Count von Trast-Saarberg. (*Exit the flunky.*)

Robert had come home without the slightest suspicion of the state of things, though Trast had forewarned him. Now as the truth begins to dawn on him he has to listen to Trast's lecture: "Unhappy is the man who has fallen out of his caste and has not the courage to cut loose his conscience from it also." For each caste, according to Trast-Sudermann, has a different morality, in particular a special sense of honor. Robert learns to his horror that under the protectorate of her older sister, the younger, Alma, has been maintaining illicit but profitable relations with young Kurt Mühlingk. In his first access of anger he demands from Kurt the restitution of his family honor; but after a night spent in tormenting sorrow his better judgment prevails. He will lift his family out of the mire and make for them a new home in some far-away

corner of the world. It is now that the vulgarity of his family is brought home to Robert, and he grows fully ashamed of the class with which birth has thrown him, for he learns how comfortably happy his nearest and dearest of kin feel in their bottomless slough. The parents are blunted to a true sense of their daughter's disgrace. Mühlingk senior plasters their wounded honor with a good-sized check, and Alma, but now threatened with a melodramatic paternal curse, is overwhelmed with clamorous gratitude by the honorable family conclave. Her own matrimonial future lies bright before her, since with her sinful fortune she has now become a far better match than if her dowry had consisted of a complete assortment of the womanly virtues. Robert can do no better than turn his back on the despicable tribe. After a stormy scene in the front-house, where he gives a very *mauvais quart d'heure* to the Mühlingks, father and son, he goes away, taking with him as his bride Lenore, the noble-minded sister of Kurt. This "heart-story," too palpably grafted on to the stock of the play, is one of several complications which are highly improbable and too plainly designed for effect. On the whole, the motivation is somewhat commonplace, and the exposition of the

*Vorfabel*, i.e. the action precedent to the play, rather violent. In its technic this play, which with its parallelism of corrupt wealth and corrupt poverty as in other respects is reminiscent of Anzengruber's *Das Vierte Gebot* ("The Fourth Commandment"), does not concert with the naturalistic movement which simultaneously with *Die Ehre* scored its first triumph in Hauptmann's "Before Sunrise." Monologue, that traditional makeshift of psychologic exposure, is not scorned, and even the notorious trick of "asides," so utterly discredited by the moderns, is employed in *Die Ehre*, which from its combining the methods of the French drama of the second empire with a greater realism has been properly termed a compromise play. The best merits of *Die Ehre* are its clever argumentation and the telling seizure of the *milieu*. But it is far inferior to later plays, and especially inadequate in its conclusion, which is brought on rather forcibly by that cleaver of all Gordian knots, the Count Trast-Saarberg. All the events make for a tragedy: it is averted by nothing but the good nature of the playwright and his *alter ego*, the inimitable count.

Much more "naturalistic" in its technic is Sudermann's second play, *Sodoms Ende* ("The

Destruction of Sodom")(1891), a Juvenalian satire on the wickedness of the modern Berlin. The hero of this tragedy — if, remarks some German critic, a wash-rag may even technically be termed a hero — reminds us in some respects, notably in his morbid incapacity for work, of Oswald Alving in Ibsen's "Ghosts." A talented young fellow has painted a picture dealing with the destruction of Sodom, which more through its cynical candor than by virtue of its intrinsic merit makes him famous at a single stroke. There is in the play a certain Dr. Weisse, who resembles in a perverted way the celebrated Konrad Bolz in Freytag's *Die Journalisten*, — a flaneur of much wit and clear sight, but morally decrepit and inert. This man remarks about the picture: "A thousand times the subject has been worked, but in what fashion? In the foreground, on a rock, good Master Lot, surrounded by other oxen and asses; a little farther back his spouse, devotedly petrified into a pillar of salt; and in the distance something which looks like three burning matches!" Willy Janikow has touched the tradition-worn subject with the flames of his lurid fantasy; in his painting it becomes the ghastly allegory of delirious sensuality and the whirling chase after frantic pleasures. Such a

picture as that cannot fail to seize upon the fancy of the Stock Exchange aristocracy for whom excitement and enjoyment are almost synonymous. Accordingly, the *Tiergartenviertel*, always glad to patronize that art which tugs hard at the nerve cords, has received the new-fangled genius in its lion cage and pampered and petted his considerable talent to death. Among us barbarians of the West, with our still half-savage notions about the superfluity of art, such treatment does not come to an aspiring artist. Nor need any American artist — I mean a real artist, not an artificer — sigh for the hardening discipline of public indifference. In a city like St. Louis or Chicago the ingenious Willy would, in all probability, have gone through a protracted and rather inconvenient régime of penury and semistarvation, instead of falling into lassitude and luxurious ennui. Things are different in Berlin, W. Dr. Weisse in his hey-day fared equally well or ill: "Look at me! In the province they call me a celebrity, and if you open any newspaper you are sure to find my name. One day I have been decorated with an order, another day a horse has run away with me — and sundry other accidents of the sort. And yet I am wretchedly gone to seed. My lyrics have all

vinegared this long time; no new ideas come to me." But he knows how to accommodate himself to the change: "So I have gone in for criticism. The howling dog has transformed himself into the biting dog." However, his pristine glory has departed: "Ah! what a great fellow I was in those days, when in every German bookcase the place of honor next to Henrietta Davidis' cookbook was reserved for me!" We know Sudermann's attitude towards such parasitic existences. In polar opposition to their moral apathy stands honest Professor Riemann, the sane and sober maker of fair to middling pictures, a man who closes his unspoiled heart hermetically against all wicked eccentricities. Riemann has no use for Nietzsche with his maxim, so alluring and convenient, of the "Beyond Good and Evil." "Let me alone with your gospel of vice, if you please," he remarks to the invertebrate Willy. In nearly every play of Sudermann some character seems to be authorized to speak for the author. Unquestionably Riemann in "The End of Sodom" is that special ablegate. Sudermann condones many sins in a man who, despite failures and downfalls, has at last attained a clarified, definite individuality; he esteems a powerful "Will to Live"; but his pity is as deaf for the

self-appointed "overman" as it is for the cry, *C'est plus fort que moi*,—that eternal appeal of the worm-eaten weakling. Sudermann is wholly free from decadence. Although much obloquy has been heaped on him for depicting such scandalous conditions and such a corrupt society as in *Sodoms Ende*, he derives the right to deal with them from the very fact that he has observed them at a very close range, yet has proven himself immune against moral infection. True it is that familiarity with the seamy side of life has stripped him of many illusions, and surely it is a matter for regret that because of his thorough sophistication he is rather unsuccessful in the dramatic presentment of innocence. Fritzchen in *Sodoms Ende* is as insufferable a specimen of the stage child as William Tell's precocious Walter. Equally infelicitous is the portrayal of Klärchen Fröhlich, the naïve victim of Willy Janikow. Much more successfully drawn by contrast is Kitty, who though for a while too close to the vortex of questionable gayeties, and engaged in some rather risky flirtations, has remained sound at the core. Sudermann loves to operate with contrasting *milieus*. In *Die Ehre* we had the *Vorder-* and the *Hinterhaus*; in *Sodoms Ende* the cramped snuggery of

Willy's impoverished, hard-working parents is held up by the side of the splendid establishment of Barczinowsky the speculator. This household is a typical abode and rallying place of brazen upstarts and reckless voluptuaries. Dr. Weisse, that "incarnation of impertinence," says with a cynical boast: "One is entirely *sans gêne* in these houses. Here we talk like hostlers. That is the *fine fleur* of social culture nowadays." That young Janikow is so easily infected by the pestilent moral atmosphere which circulates in this den of arrant luxury is perhaps proof sufficient that there is not much to the man. And so it is difficult to understand why mature Frau Adah, her piquant niece Kitty, and poor Klärchen Fröhlich fight for him so madly. For a while things go swimmingly. Willy is not really a bad man, for to be bad is at least to have some character. He merely combines the traits of a thoroughgoing lazzarone and an unqualified egoist. Nothing could be worse for him than the adulation which greets him at every turn,—from his poverty-stricken parents and his unreasonably faithful friend Kramer at home, and in the mansion of the rich stock gambler from the seductive lady of the house. A stronger head than his might be turned by so much frankincense and

myrrh. The impudent fellow indulges in liberties which loudly call for a flogging, but behold — all the world throws bouquets at him. A glaring instance is his declaration of his so-called love to Kitty. Is he, after all, but a harmless idler? Far from it. Sudermann holds that he who has been left at the wayside because he missed the train that was to speed him onward to his proper destination will, as a rule, bring destruction not only upon himself but on others also. And so Willy Janikow, that shining specimen of prurient genius who once expresses a passing curiosity to know "how an honest fellow feels," crushes the happiness of six human lives in the brief space of five theatrical acts, with about as much compunction as that with which a man swallows his half dozen oysters by way of prelude to dinner. Yet towards the end, after committing a twofold villainy against Klärchen and his loyal Kramer, he whines and whimpers, "Do me the last favor and kill me." Kramer, who has the tender sensibilities of Adam Bede and the "Manxman," cannot nerve himself to the deed. And so, as his hero cannot rise to the opportunity for a decent suicide, the playwright is compelled to invoke a most improbable, but fortunately fatal, hemorrhage.

We cannot help admiring the lifelike picture of that class of society which dances—in Berlin and elsewhere too—not, as the saying has it, on the edge of a crater, but rather on the thin surface of a foul morass. Even more admirable is the technical mastery shown in the construction. The motivation of Kramer's threatening vengeance, the manner in which Willy Janikow's mother discovers that Adah is her son's mistress,—these and other incidents are unexcelled examples of intelligent dramatic composition; and our grateful appreciation for these may make us indulgent to the disgusting scene which presents Janikow father and son both hopelessly the worse for liquor, and to the somewhat theatrical soliloquy which brings the piece to a close. *Sodoms Ende* though realistic is not true to life; a satire is always an exaggeration. Still, although the conditions of life which are presented in this play do not impress one as actual or probable, they do not seem impossible. The author has simply culled the ingredients out of which the work is distilled from a far greater area of observation than is brought to view. He makes no effort to palm it off as a piece of life. Even in this, the most uncompromisingly realistic of his longer

plays, he does not attempt to reproduce the jargon of the every-day. The greater, then, the power of his craftsmanship, since he succeeds in spite of this in giving to his play such a considerable semblance of dramatic truth. I say truth advisedly, but do not mean the literal truth of life; of that even the most thoroughgoing realism is bound to fall short. The truth of a play consists in the playwright's power to make us accept illusions for facts.

Two years after *Sodoms Ende*, in 1893, *Heimat* ("Magda") was performed for the first time, — a play in which the eclectic method of *Die Ehre* is again employed in preference to the greater naturalism of *Sodoms Ende*. The subject dealt with in "Magda" has been treated in a humorous vein by another modern writer, Ernst von Wolzogen, in his comedy *Die Kinder der Exzellenz*. It in fact contains a strong serio-comic possibility. However, in "Magda" what humor there is, is episodic, incidental. The main drift is opposed to any form of levity, the satirical spirit held firmly in check by the serious purpose. "Magda" is the most brilliant defense of Sudermann's sociological thesis. A social conflict lies at the basis of the tragedy. The author resumes the subject already once

treated in *Die Ehre*, viewing it from a different point under altered circumstances; carrying it, in my estimation, to a more natural, or at any rate to a more probable, conclusion. The olden time, incarnate in the retired Lieutenant-Colonel Schwartz, is in conflict with the new. Throne and altar are struggling with new-bred ideals for ethical supremacy. The form of the conflict may seem antiquated in its poignancy, but thus the clash in the tragedy is all the better prepared. Now from this dramatic substructure arises the private tragedy of a spirited individual revolting against the caste in order to enforce a right to independent happiness. In the act of self-liberation which necessitates the painful severing of sacred ties, the play culminates. We have seen Robert Heinecke in the throes of the same ordeal, but he fought his battle by the side of a trusty and powerful ally; moreover, the loathsome vulgarity of his own people made the separation relatively easy. It is different in *Heimat*. The hero this time is a woman, — a woman who is put altogether on her mettle. Do not think for a moment that Sudermann's play deals with woman's "emancipation," as the word was understood twenty-five years ago. For a modern writer of his way of

thinking the woman question has passed beyond that theoretical stage. Since the overwhelming majority of progressive-minded men has pronounced in favor of the admission of women to higher studies and to the practice of arts and professions, the ground is nearly cut out from under the feet of the adversaries of the movement. Even for the German woman the realization of her claims to equality has begun under propitious auspices. It is quite in vain that the little god to whom the male philistine has erected an altar in his stomach still struggles against the coming certainty, and questions with an anxious sigh who is going to cook for him after that.

Magda has left the paternal roof many years ago in order to save herself from the crushing tyranny of her father, a man who brings up his family after the fashion of a petty sovereign, instilling by rigid discipline, along with a reverence for his ideals, a thorough respect for the great military phantoms of Pride and Honor. The immediate cause of the rupture was Magda's refusal to marry young Pastor Heffterdingk. She goes to Berlin, first as companion to an old lady. After a year she decides to go on the stage. The

news of this disgracing step so shocks the old officer that he has a paralytic stroke, from which he never quite recovers. He is compelled to quit the service, — a terrible blow for him. Thus Magda is the cause of all his misfortunes. Meanwhile what is her own fate? Utterly disowned by her father, all alone in Berlin, where she struggles to open a career for herself, the impulsive girl succumbs to the blandishments of a young barrister. After he abandons her, she passes through the vicissitudes of an artist's career to ultimate triumph. Now a famous prima donna, she has returned under her stage name for a passing visit to her native town, where she is to be the star in a great music festival. The remembrance of her father's despotism is still vivid within her and her resentment unbroken. Nevertheless, she yields to the persuasion of the unselfish Heffterdingk and patches up a peace with her father, who, likewise through the pastor's efforts, though at first terribly stirred, consents to receive her. Knowing that there can be no *entente* between her and her people, that only a sense of piety still attracts her to her home, Magda has no business to move from the hotel to the paternal rooftree merely to gratify her father's unreasonable whim. On this

point the old man really acts like a monomaniac. If Magda should only stand her own ground there would be no tragedy. Nobody knows this so well as Sudermann, and that is just why she must make the fatal concession. A mere removal from hotel to house is made responsible for the sequel! The problem of *Die Ehre* is here restated, but this time it is viewed on the obverse side, the spiritual reaction of the home people under the contact with the "outsider" furnishing the dramatic motive. That there must be a clash is clear. The very contrast between Magda's free mode of life and the narrow-gauge track along which the family life is trailing, the contrast between their straitened decorum and her somewhat stagy *sans gêne*, is bound to produce it. Still, Magda may not stay long enough to make serious trouble. But then there is Magda's past. We understand that she is not a common adventuress, but shall we expect her father to draw nice distinctions? Magda therefore sets the condition that her past life must not be stirred up by any questions, and thus makes her entry into her father's home with a stipulation which borders dangerously on a *jeu de théâtre*. When I last saw the play it was certainly either a symbolic

coincidence, or an intentional hint between acts, that after the drop of the curtain, immediately after Magda's injunction is laid down, the orchestra struck up the Lohengrin motive, "*Nie sollst du mich befragen!*" The question now is, How long will the unreasonable old gentleman, whom the very condition has put on the alert, live up to his promise and leave his daughter unmolested? In the third act he is the horrified earwitness of Magda's secret. Events now follow one another with sweeping force. The old soldier, beside himself with grief and shame, loses his head. It never occurs to him that if he would keep silence and allow Magda to go her way, he would be no worse off than he long had been. She has been a stranger to him for many years. He has not cared to know what has become of her. Even the mention of her name has been forbidden in his house. But as he has worn His Majesty's uniform, his sense of honor is always on the verge of an explosion. His only care is to scour the blot from his scutcheon. One hope only is left. Dr. Keller, Magda's seducer, who is at present a close political friend of Schwartze, a prominent member of a religious circle, and a conspicuous defender of the Good,

the True, and the Noble, must marry Magda; then her family will all be rehabilitated. Keller is a true representative of that detestable tiptoe pharisaism known in Germany as *Strebertum*. He is not troubled by the fact that Magda despises him from the bottom of her heart as a hypocrite who took advantage of her inexperience. He considers only his career, which would be shattered by the scandal consequent upon a duel with Schwartz. An understanding is reached by his proposal of marriage. Through the friendly mediation of Pastor Heffterdingk Magda accepts the proposal. Keller then comes out with conditions. Magda must leave the stage. That he takes for granted with cavalier impudence. But he demands further that she shall permanently separate from their child. This is the last straw. She orders him out of the house. But the old colonel stands determined to compel her to yield to the cruel demand. Now Magda, realizing that she has again put her neck into the iron collar of paternal authority from which she had once freed herself, rises in revolt; her child at least she will not sacrifice to such despotism. Her motive in this decisive fight for liberty is not selfish. Magda's proud exclamation,

"I am myself and must not lose myself," must not mislead us. We have seen her ready to submit, to suffer abridgment of her personal freedom, even to relinquish her brilliant career, all for the sake of her old father, to whom she feels that she owes reparation. But now her maternal instincts rebel; and when she reflects that such a heinous sacrifice is sanctioned by the general code of morals, she tramples that code into the dust. In her deep provocation she no longer takes heed of the father. "*Und wenn er nicht der einsige wäre — ?*" she exclaims. To make that marriage impossible she hints at liaisons (probably fictitious) with other men. The father, desperate, raises the pistol against the self-declared courtesan, when a fatal stroke of apoplexy arrests his hand. Over his dead body Magda steps again to her former freedom; not without a share of punishment, for her conscience will never entirely acquit her of blame for her father's anguish and death. Yet the way in which Mrs. Patrick Campbell at the end of the play kneels in the center of the stage, crying in contrite tones, "My God! what have I done!" is not true to the spirit of Magda. The heroine of *Heimat* in this hour of agony must stand

forth — it is thus that Sarah Bernhardt interprets the part — solitary, in lugubrious magnificence.

The opposite of Magda in conduct is Elizabeth, the central figure in the drama *Das Glück im Winkel* ("Happiness in a Nook") (1896). Elizabeth, named rightly (by Bulthaupt) "a Bacchante with a Madonna-soul," looks upon marriage as an asylum wherein the respectable may seek refuge and safety when beset by temptation. Else how could she ever have consented to marry an elderly schoolmaster, unlovable in spite of his kind heart and many sterling qualities? When temptation returns, with the appearance in her home of the man from whom she has fled, she lacks the strength either to bear with quiet endurance her self-inflicted martyrdom or violently to throw down her yoke like Magda. To decide her fate requires the superior moral fortitude of another personality. Although what has been said does not reflect against the nobility of Elizabeth's character, it is somewhat difficult to call her the heroine. Who then fills the principal part? Can it be Röcknitz, the East Elbian athlete, the "strong man" of the play, with his enormous chest expansion and dwarfed conscience? He cheekily poses as the *Übermensch*, but is a

flat failure in the rôle. The real trouble with him is that, far from being overman he is not man enough, so that we wait in vain for an explanation between him and Elizabeth's husband, Wiedemann. His grandiloquent boast that he will not steal the latter's happiness, but boldly take it, "face to face," etc., — when does he make it good? I suspect that if Elizabeth, prevented from self-destruction by her husband, resigns herself to the "happiness in a nook," her change of heart is due to disappointment in Röcknitz — to disillusionment — fully as much as to the conquering generosity of Wiedemann's love. In the final explanation between husband and wife the playwright has, to my feeling, gone too far in an endeavor to win sympathy for the man's high-mindedness. It transpires that Wiedemann had proposed to Elizabeth, the homeless "poor relation" of the Röcknitzes, mainly from a philanthropic motive; because he had suspected, wrongly, that — she had been ruined by a faithless lover. Would it not be natural for Elizabeth in her innocence and womanly dignity to resent the suspicion? We look into the deep well of Wiedemann's compassion with a mingled feeling of admiration, wonderment, and contempt; I

doubt if, on the whole, the revelation heightens our liking for him. At any rate, the domestic drama seems hardly concluded. Elizabeth has learned to despise Röcknitz, whom she had secretly loved all her life. That danger is moved out of her path. But will she learn to love her husband simply because by the author's fiat she sees him in a new halo? It taxes our credulity too much to believe in the possibility of such a woman's happiness in her union with a plain and elderly man who can have little to his credit in her eyes beyond a good measure of kindness and a certain sort of latent moral heroism. And is there in Elizabeth's temperament the possibility of complete renunciation? Why should we assume that the old regret will trouble her no more, of which she says: "And then come the winter evenings when one stares into the lamp, and the summer nights when the linden before the house is in bloom. And you say to yourself, Yonder somewhere lies the world and happiness—but you sit here and knit stockings." Behind Elizabeth's happiness looms a huge question mark. Sudermann's own philosophy prompts our doubt whether she will ever be happy with this husband. The two belong to different worlds. /

Their love is a compromise love. We feel there is a sadly damaged spot in this marriage. It has been covered with a patch, but will the patch stick forever?

"Magda" is Sudermann's most successful play. *Das Glück im Winkel* stands far behind it in point of popularity. This may be because Elizabeth's character appeals less to the imagination of the star actress. But the play is very significant indeed; for its lesson is that the powerful individuality of Magda hews out its own fate, while Elizabeth's lesser personality has to be content with the lot assigned by the conventions. *Das Glück im Winkel* also marks a distinct turn in favor of the accepted morality and therefore a step in the ethics of the author. Similarly, it is the last treatment of one of his artistic problems,—the impact of two diverse spheres henceforth ceases to be of immediate interest to him.

In point of time between the two plays last named lies *Die Schmetterlingsschlacht* ("The Battle of the Butterflies") (1895), a comedy, but by no means a pleasing one, and, in my opinion, without enduring worth. I dispense, therefore, with a detailed analysis. Still, as a piece of realistic *milieu* painting, this work surpasses all

previous efforts of Sudermann. The intimate life of the lesser official class is completely exposed to view, the contrast between its decorous penury and the quite different tribulations of the manufacturing class being strikingly expressed through the families Hergentheim and Winkelmann. Max Winkelmann, the idealist, finds himself placed between and above the two classes, somewhat as Robert is in *Die Ehre*, since in respect to sentiment and conduct he stands on a higher level than either. The plot of the play is entirely subordinate to the characterization of the people involved. The latter is exceedingly clever, especially in the case of the many-daughtered Widow Hergentheim and the *commis voyageur* Kessler, with his practical wisdom, gift o' gab, and non-interfering conscience,—a classic type of one kind of successful business man. The difficulty is that the details in this comedy are obtrusive, and the humor too much acidulated. The dramatist, again over-anxious to point his moral, is too liberal with his scorn, in consequence of which the work loses much of that "high and excellent seriousness" which should underlie every true satire.

Another point of resemblance with *Die Ehre* is the outcome of *Die Schmetterlingsschlacht*. The

oldest of the Hergentheim girls, Elsa, a young widow, has been carrying on a love intrigue with Kessler. Rosi, the youngest sister, is the innocent go-between. These clandestine relations are kept up even after Elsa has succeeded in capturing Max Winkelmann, the son of the rich manufacturer by whom the sisters are employed at decorative art work. The situation is all but discovered by the prospective husband. The Hergentheims, desperately loath to let go of Max, on whom hangs their salvation from pinching poverty, resort to a most cruel measure. Max is to be made to believe that not Elsa but her youngest sister is Kessler's paramour. Rosi, who is hardly more than a child, is forced by the rest of the family to incriminate herself so as to clear the reputation of her sister. In spite of her piteous entreaties, the vicarious sacrifice is actually extorted from her, and that in the presence of Max, whom she secretly loves. To me this is the most revolting scene in any modern play. However, the ruse is thwarted, and Max and Rosi are allowed to make each other happy. This satisfactory ending does not make a comedy, or *Die Ehre* would have to be so classed. Certainly *Die Schmetterlingsschlacht* is a comedy

only in name. It is too grim in its humor, too acrimonious in its mood, to dismiss the reader with that serenity or satisfaction which is invariably derived from a true comedy. In spite of the happy issue the play is unquestionably very depressing.

The two plays that have just been discussed conclude in a way the series of Sudermann's social dramas, strictly so called. Though social questions are by no means banished from subsequent plays, they are henceforth not treated with exclusive reference to a special case in hand, nor even to our own time; rather they are considered from a higher, more general human outlook, — *sub specie aeterni*. This larger view, which in itself need not be optimistic, is plainly indicated in *Morituri* (1897), a collection of three one-act plays without any organic interrelation, but dealing variously, as we shall see, with one and the same psychologic theme.

The first of the series is named *Teja*. It is the first work of Sudermann that does not mirror a view of modern German life, for it throws on the stage a segment of that Germanic antiquity with which we have become fairly familiar through the writings of Gustav Freytag, Felix Dahn, William

Morris, and others. The hero of the dramolet is that last stern king of the Ostrogoths who, in the lengthy, changeful struggle for existence forced upon the Gothic tribes by Rome and Byzantium, laid down his life, together with the lives of his men.

Sudermann has brightened up the tragedy of Teja's end and at the same time raised it to a nobler pitch. This is the story as told in the play. The Gothic host has dwindled down to a mere handful of half-famished warriors who, intrenched in their impregnable position, confidently await the arrival of supplies. Every minute the provision ships are expected to heave in sight. At this time of breathless suspense the Goths, obedient to an ancient law, have chosen a wife for their king. The gloomy Teja has submitted with resigned indifference to the will of his people. This is his wedding day. Bishop Agila has just finished the marriage sermon. But all through the ceremony Teja's thoughts have wandered out to the ships that are so eagerly watched for. For them, and the fate of his people, for nothing else, does he care. Almost immediately after the wedding he learns that treachery has delivered the fleet into the hand of the enemy. There is no

hope left for the Goths to grasp at. They have only one alternative: they may slowly and ignobly perish of hunger among the rocky hollows of Vesuvius, or they may make a sortie and be slaughtered like cattle by the Hunnish butchers. Of course they choose the battle. The brave little band makes ready to seal with their blood the death warrant of their race. *Dulce est pro patria mori!* But they cannot go joyfully to their death, for they are a vagabond tribe; their only home is the camp, where dwell also their wives and children. These they are permitted to visit for the last time. But they are enjoined to take silent leave, for the king would not have even one of them unstrung by the tears and wailings of the women. The sequel shows that the woman-hating king does injustice to the Gothic maids and matrons. The first to convert him to a better opinion is his lovely Queen Bathilda. The whole pathos of Teja's life is compacted into the brief scene. In the eleventh hour the doomed man has learned for the first time to know happiness. He has laughed and frolicked with his bride till the moment when she must be told. She accepts the inevitable with naïve heroism; without any wild outburst of grief and despair she calmly kisses her

husband's brow, thus consecrating him to death. Teja's eyes are opening more and more. In the last scene he says to the bishop: "I have insulted you this evening. Forgive me and accept my thanks, for now I also know why the Goth loves death." He seizes his sword, then to his men: "Well, are you ready? Is the farewell over?"

*Theodemir*: My lord, we have acted contrary to your orders. Which of our women guessed it and which one of us told it is hard to say. Enough, they all know it.

*Teja*: And so they set up a great lamentation?

*Theodemir*: My lord, they silently blessed us with the kiss of death.

*Teja (startled, half to himself)*: They too! (*Aloud.*) Verily, we are a race of kings. Oh, the pity of our fate! Forward! (*He walks towards the background. The rest follow. The curtain falls amid the deafening cheers of the people greeting its king.*)

The theme of the masterly dramatic anecdote may be said to be the psychologic reaction of a character under the sudden certitude of death, and by this general problem *Teja* is closely interlinked with the second, and, in my judgment,

the best part not only of the collection but of Sudermann's dramatic work in its entirety.

It is entitled *Fritzchen*, deals with the present, and serves as a species of epilogue to *Die Ehre*. A boy lieutenant of the Prussian army, a good-natured, happy-go-lucky sort of a chap, has a liaison with a married woman. The wronged husband horsewhips him out of the house. Under the code of honor which obtains in the German army nothing can now avert a catastrophe. This code of honor, as everybody knows, does not shine for its logic. It generously condones many sins and peccadillos. The violation of the seventh commandment would not of itself hurt Fritzchen greatly in the eyes of his comrades. But the code never relents towards the officer who has suffered chastisement without taking bloody personal revenge. The still-remembered *Affaire Brüsewitz* and sundry like occurrences have served to enlighten the uninitiated as to the reason why the German officer in times of peace carries a keen-edged blade in the scabbard which we have heard clatter so smartly on the sidewalks of German cities. Now Fritzchen has been punished shamefully, and has not defended himself, because his saber was—not at hand. He may therefore thank

his lucky stars if the verdict of the regimental Council of Honor to which the affair has been referred is in favor of a duel; for an adverse decision would signify undying disgrace for Fritzchen. He has come on a hurried farewell visit to his home. Here, by prearrangement, he receives the message: A duel has been decided on and must be fought early on the morrow. Herr von Lanski is a superior marksman and, as the challenged, will lead off in the exchange of bullets. Fritzchen, accordingly, is a doomed man. Moreover, it is plainly hinted that he has made up his mind to fall in the duel. With consummate skill and, as one German critic well puts it, "unexampled dramatic laconism," the author now undertakes to show how the pampered young *viveur*, who in pursuance of his father's fatal advice has early sown his full measure of wild oats against the time of his manorial existence, turns sober in the face of death. In his hour of gloom his manly virtues come to the fore. As he hurriedly reviews his squandered life there flits across his vision a picture of that domestic happiness he would have elected had he not allowed himself to be swerved aside from his natural bent by the traditions of his house. His home, his love, his prospects, they

are all in this sphere. But he is done with prospects, with love, with life itself. The brief tragedy speeds from scene to scene, with a terrible incremental force, till the climax is reached in the explanation between father and son; thence without a halt to the most painful ordeal reserved for Fritzchen,—the leave-taking from his invalid mother, from whom the truth must be carefully kept. The pathos of this parting is unspeakable, the poor boy striving heroically to hide his heart-ache under a boisterous feigned merriment; then at last with tender deception leaving home, a merry tune on his lips, as he goes straightway to his death.

*Das Ewig-Männliche* ("The Eternally-Masculine"), which is the last of the *Morituri* collection, is designated by the poet as a fantasy (*Spiel*). And, to tell the truth, it has no more realism than the fairy plays (*Märchendramen*) which came into vogue about the time of its origin. In its baroque costuming, this one-act comedy brings to mind the preciosity of the age of Louis XIV, immortally satirized by Molière. As, however, Sudermann's satire is not directed against anybody in particular, the dramatis personæ are labeled in a general way as "Queen," "Marshal of the Court," "Ladies-in-waiting," "Marquis

in pale blue," "Marquis in pink," "Painter," etc., very much as in Goethe's *Die natürliche Tochter*.

In contradistinction to all previous plays of Sudermann, *Das Ewig-Männliche* is written in verse, nay more, in rime. The example of the author's ingenious friend, Ludwig Fulda, may have had something to do with that. As in the rimed comedies of Fulda, it should be added, so here the language fairly scintillates with epigram and witticism. The play deals apparently, like its two companion pieces, with the spiritual state of a character unexpectedly confronted with death. An artist who is painting the Queen's portrait is made bold by the provoking coquetry of the royal model. She listens, alarmed but not displeased. The scene is interrupted by the Marshal, who, himself in love with the Queen, is ordered by her with great presence of mind to cool his rival's ardor. The two men face each other after the manner of Tasso and Antonio in Goethe's *Torquato Tasso*, the part of greater practical wisdom falling this time to the politic artist. As a sensible man he realizes that he has no better chances against the Marshal's sword than the latter would have against his paint brush.

And so he proceeds cleverly to enlighten the love-blind warrior on the unworthiness of his idol. With the Marshal's consent and coöperation he improvises a little tragi-comedy; and when the Marshal, feigning death, gets a humiliating insight into the true inwardness of the adored woman, artist and courtier, arm in arm, go merrily into exile, leaving the handsome Jean, the Queen's impudent waiting-man, alone in the field as representative of the "Eternally-Masculine."

It has been shown that the three dramas do not constitute, in any dramaturgic sense, a miniature trilogy. The collective title is justified by a central idea; the difference hinges on the relations of men to ideals which vary with clime and time. In *Teja* we see the manifestation of a wholly ethnic consciousness, in *Fritzchen* the hero's conduct is inspired by sectional or specific class ethics. *Das Ewig-Männliche* is an almost cynical reversal of the *Fritzchen* tragedy, two men of force and value barely escaping the social folly of sacrificing life and limb to a vapid convention.

Sudermann's next play brought a surprise to his friends as well as to his adversaries. It was a biblical tragedy. It had become the fashion at that time, when literary art had practically passed

out of extreme naturalism, to nose around for hidden symbolism in every new work of fiction. To seek any esoteric meaning in *Johannes* (1898), however, is to look for disappointment. Sudermann's hero is he of whom it is written in the third chapter of the Evangelist Matthew: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." In the New Testament the tragic ending of John the Baptist is subtly hinted rather than fully motivated. Enough is left unexplained in the conduct of all concerned to have tempted more than one writer to venture an elaboration of the brief account. Sudermann's aim in treating the subject is to secure for the unfortunate preacher in the wilderness the fullest measure of our human sympathy. Let us see to what extent his purpose is attained. The forerunner of the gentle Nazarene is a hard-and-fast-bound Puritan, chained and paralyzed by

his inflexible asceticism, without real understanding of the human heart, and therefore without compassion and charity. With a delicate psychologic instinct Sudermann explains the fall of the fanatical prophet through his spiritual awakening. John at first imagines the Messiah whom he heralds to be a kingly lord: "And wouldst thou know, woman, how he shall come?" proclaims the Baptist in act iii, scene x; "as king of the hosts, covered with an armor of gold, his sword uplifted over his head, he will come to save the Lord's own people. His enemies he will trample under the hoofs of his steed, but the young men of Israel will greet him exulting. Behold, O woman, thus shall he arrive." The Baptist's fundamental misconception of his mission works his destruction so soon as he, the fanatic of rabbinical lore, loses the absolute faith in himself; so soon as the Mightier One cometh after him, the latchet of whose shoe he is unworthy to unloose; so soon as he shudderingly opens his eyes and finds himself unequal to the work he has set out to do. John's fate is akin to Hamlet's: destiny has imposed a task upon him for which he is morally unprepared. The gradual conversion of such a character from mere virtuous rigor to real humanity

supplies a theme not only of dramatic but of intense religious interest. Sudermann's play may be called, by a figure of speech, a tract raised to the power of art, a comparison borne out, among other ways, by the archaic solemnity of its language. The story of John the Baptist as told in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is greatly elaborated for the psychologic purpose of the play. The following is an outline of the plot.

The Jewish people writhes in the fetters of a twofold tyranny. Whatever of vitality is left to it by the Roman oppressors is slowly sapped by the Jews' own theocratic "Law," debased by bigotry and priestcraft to a heart-and-soul-killing ritualism. The mass of the people, instead of being quickened at the fount of a living religion, are put off with empty formulæ; thus they have turned into a race of pessimists who, despairing of their power of self-redemption, strain their longing eyes to descry the Messiah of the prophetic message, "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luke iii, 17). John himself is held by a portion of the people to be the prophesied. But his own consciousness tells him better: he is

but the harbinger of the Saviour. In this conviction the other-worldly man assumes provisionally the part of a popular leader for which he is so ill made. We find him at Jerusalem, inciting the populace against the Tetrarch who, with brazen adultery, has just flung a fatal insult at the pure family morals of the Israelites. But at the very start the hermit pines for his desert: "Am I set as a lord over this people? Let the shepherd drive his flock through thorns or flowers. I thirst for solitude. I long for my rocks." Only by stern constraint from within and without does he remain at the head of the insurrection, a general without a plan of campaign, a leader who knows not the way. While he broods in this state of uncertainty the word of Simon the Galilean strikes root in his soul: "Higher than law and sacrifice is love," and there is implanted in his soul the leaven of destruction; for the same message which paves for him the way to a riper understanding unmans him completely for his political enterprise: "Ye children of men, there is in your souls a roaring as of many waters clear and troubled; I am to gather all these into a mighty river, and I feel that I shall drown therein." Even yet he remains unyieldingly loyal to the old Messianic illusion, till he learns

with dismay from the lips of a beggar woman that his message holds no comfort for them that labor and are heavy laden, that these do not want his golden-panoplied Messiah.

*Mesulemeth*: Take thy message elsewhere. I will none of it.

*John*: What? You will none of the Messiah?

*Mesulemeth*: Not him, — not that one. For so many have come before clad in golden panoplies and have raised the sword so often that Israel bleeds like a sacrificial beast. Nor shall he be a king. When kings come, they come for the kings. To us poor none has ever come. Begone, O stranger! Thou strikest at my remnant of hope. Go! thou art a false prophet. Go! let me lie by the wayside.

The sting of this rebuke rankles in John's troubled soul. Just as he is making ready to lead the people against the sinful Tetrarch, the commandment that we should love our enemy, proclaimed in the land of Galilee by Jesus whom he baptized, comes to John and makes his hand drop the stone already raised against Herod. And this is the end of his leadership. In my opinion the whole plot gravitates toward this internal conflict, and not, as some have thought, about the temptation

of the Baptist by Salome. In the soul of John the Baptist the same struggle goes on between the old time and the new which we have already witnessed in Sudermann's social plays; but this time the issue involves the fundamental history-shaping attitude toward life, and the decision is therefore wider in its bearing. The drama attains its purpose so soon as the power of the new spiritual interpretation of life which we call Christianity has conquered the theocratic world view in the sentiment and will of the hero; then John may calmly yield up his life for the new certainty: "I hear all around me a mighty roaring, and the blessed light well-nigh envelops me. . . . A throne has descended from the heavens with pillars of fire. And on it sits, clad in white raiment, the Prince of Peace. And his sword is named 'Love,' and 'Charity' is his battle cry." It is a fitter close for this tragedy of a human soul than any other Sudermann might have invented, that directly after the beheading of John the Baptist loud, exultant hosannas announce the entry of the Nazarene into Jerusalem.

With all his force and skill and depth of conviction Sudermann does not fully attain his immediate object of compelling a fellow-feeling for

Johannes on the part of the beholder, and thus he misses, in part at least, the object of all tragedy, which is to awaken pity and fear. Only when, through the unraveling of the human fate to which we are made privy, we are made to beat our breasts, and when the Mahavákya, the "great word" of the Vedas: *Tat tvám asi* ("This is thou"), rises spontaneously to our lips, only then may the poet glory in having set free those potent emotions. We of the twentieth century have too little in common with a man who in his far-off desert has weaned himself from all passion and frailty, whose nature is steeped in a frigid, forbidding virtue, and whose personal purity is but the lusterless reflection of a gloomy, loveless self-righteousness. Herodias speaks from our own hearts when she hurls her rebuke against the unapproachable saint: "He who would presume to be a judge over men must have a share in their lives and be human with his fellows. But thou seemest to dwell in regions so far away that even the throbbing of the human heart seems to thee a folly. . . . Thou hast timidly shrunk from every sin, retiring like a coward into the solitude, and now crawlst forth to call others guilty. Maybe the fiery winds of the desert have taught thee to hate; but what

knowest thou of those who live and die for the sake of their love?"

For yet another reason John the Baptist is unfit to be the hero of a tragedy. In the crisis of his dramatic development, when at last the true humanity fires his whole being, he cannot lead mankind forward and up to better, higher things, for his spiritual energy does not become kinetic, he is only a passive, uncreative character.

The most imposing figure in the play is the woman Herodias. Like Lady Macbeth, she is an incarnation of ruthless, violent ambition. She has lent a willing ear to the wiles of Herod, not in order to earn by fawning and begging a daily offering of caresses, not for the gratification of her feminine vanity, but in order to have absolute power over him: to be not his mistress but his master. John shall be for Herodias the ardently desired tool of her political aggrandizement. To purchase so rare an instrument even the youthful charms of her daughter seem not too high a price to her. It is seen at this point that Sudermann, like others before him, seeks to motive the part of Herodias in the fate of John. In this he is successful, but far less successful is he in his interpretation of Salome's ready acquiescence in her mother's

design. To the adolescent Salome John the Baptist is primarily a male, no more, no less. In her veins the wayward blood of her race runs riot. Her premature, unwholesome sensuality is directed upon the shaggy apostle, not despite but because of his singularity. Thus she appears tainted with a pathologic perversity and seems to belong not properly to the world of the New Testament, but rather to the morbid vaporings of an August Strindberg, Marcel Prévost, or Catulle Mendès. Quite as diseased as her infatuation for the wild man from Judea is her revulsion against him when he scorns her, her truculent revenge, and her savage triumph over the victim's severed head.

The Herod of the play scarcely deserves mention: a slinking, venal degenerate; the fox of the Scriptures (Luke xiii, 31-32), not sly enough to be more than a cringing pander to the insolent Roman, and a callow puppet in the hands of his concubine.

Despite the freedom with which the story of the Baptist as told by the Evangelists is treated, Sudermann's *Johannes* is in form and substance a biblical play; hence it is a natural desire to draw from it some inference as to the poet's relation to the Christian faith.

In this regard too, as in all others, Sudermann is found to be a modern man. The time is happily past in Germany when to rail or sneer at every positive religious belief was to give evidence of polish and intellectual distinction. On the other hand, too, the divines and laymen of every creed have gradually adopted a more respectful and tolerant tone toward their honest adversaries. The disposition of the modern German who lays claim to real culture—that is to say, not education of the mind alone, but also of the sensibilities—is to bow in reverence before that genuine piety in which the orthodox Christian and Jew, the liberal, the dissenter, and the earnest agnostic have a common meeting ground. And that is, at the last, the religion of St. John the Baptist. It consists in the same genuine godliness which was upheld in the sixteenth century by honest, simple-hearted Hans Sachs, when during the high tide of religious strife he naïvely gave it as his opinion that “the ancient test of a Christian is charity, and not the eating of flesh, for cats and dogs can do that too.”

/ Sudermann's next play, *Die drei Reiherfedern* (“The Three Heron-Plumes”) (1898) differs curiously from all its predecessors. The author calls

it "a dramatic poem"; in reality it belongs to the class of the fairy play and may be grouped with Hauptmann's *Die versunkene Glocke* and Fulda's *Der Talisman*, albeit the *Märchen* in *Die drei Reiherfedern* is constructed by Sudermann's own fancy, unaided by any relationship to folklore or mythology, and must therefore depend upon its intrinsic fascination for whatever interest it may enlist. Once before, in *Das Ewig-Männliche*, Sudermann strayed into the world of poetic caprice. The dramatic plot in "The Three Heron-Plumes" is the mere vehicle of an allegory, and the technical treatment is in frank contravention of the naturalistic prescript. Here, as in "The Eternally-Masculine," we find types and not real individuals, if we except at most Prince Witte's fiercely faithful retainer, the rough, colossal Hans Lorbass, *baumlang und ungeschlacht*, as he is described in the play. The hero himself lacks dramatic personality; he is but the shadowy symbol of the restless, insatiable cravings of an idealist with those same emotional aspirations which so many German poets have felt tempted to fathom. "The tireless child of Desire" he calls himself, and he is, indeed, a literary cousin of Faust, Don Juan, and Master Heinrich the bell-founder.

It is his tragical destiny to spend his life in a forlorn chase after the happiness which all the time he holds unwittingly in his grasp. Sent on an adventurous expedition by the graveyard witch (*Begräbnisfrau*), a character that calls to mind Hauptmann's Granny Wittichen, Prince Witte takes from a sacred white heron three feathers which possess magic power. If he throws the first of them into the flames, Witte will behold the dim likeness of his ideal woman, the blessing of whose love is to illumine his existence. When the second feather is burnt that woman shall appear before him, walking in her sleep. But when the third feather falls to ashes that embodiment of his ideal love must die. Prince Witte, just returned, puts the first feather to the test; the vague outline of a gigantic woman appears on the horizon and slowly vanishes into the air. Her features Witte has not been able to see. If ever he meets her, how shall he recognize her? Soon he comes to the court of the beautiful widowed queen of Samland, who, for the sake of her people, has promised to marry him who shall overcome all other suitors. She falls in love with Witte even before he enters the lists to win her, but he is felled to the ground by the Duke Widwolf, his

bastard brother, the same who drove him from his inherited dukedom of Gotland, and who now claims the hand of the queen as his right. However, Lorbass, with the queen's warriors, sets upon the insolent usurper, putting him and all his fighting men to flight. The queen, contrary to her sworn promise, marries Prince Witte, who is to rule over the land until his little stepson shall have come of age. But to Witte's hazy longings after the unknown love and his disgust with the commonplace are superadded the pangs of conscience because of his own and his consort's perjury. Under the weight of remorse his activities slacken, and gradually his better nature falls into a torpor. He neglects his royal office, surrenders himself to wild revelries, and allows the royal sword to grow rusty. Yet his soul continues to yearn for its ideal. While in this torn state of mind he burns the second plume in the dead of night. To his amazement his own wife appears, walking with eyes closed in sleep. On Witte in his blindness the coincidence makes no impression. He bitterly upbraids the queen, whom he suspects of spying on his nightly carousals, and draws away from her farther than ever. Sinking deeper and deeper in his sloth, he at last refuses

to head his people against Widwolf, who has come to wreak his vengeance. As a last heroic remedy against the lethargic apathy of the king the rude giant Lorbass,—in this play, with a possible significance, the morals of the overman are delegated to a subsidiary character,—having read the king's mind, determines to kill the young heir apparent. With the prince out of the way, so he reasons, the king will rise to his office, for he will then have to fight for his own, not for a "borrowed" kingdom! But even as Hauptmann's Poor Heinrich gains a saving triumph over his selfishness, so King Witte is roused at last from his culpable indolence, not through a crime but through his better nature. The grim Hans Lorbass, having softened at the critical moment, returns with the boy. At this sight the king, who has been crazed by self-accusations, recovers himself. With zeal he assumes his royal task in the nick of time. His valiant arm soon lays low the enemy who storm the palace. The kingdom is safe. And Witte? *Errette mich vom Alltag!* ("Deliver me from the everyday!") With this exclamation he demands the freedom of which he has dreamed for years. Together with his faithful Lorbass he leaves his "purloined" grandeur and

resumes the aimless pursuit of his hazy ideal. After fifteen years spent in a vagabondage full of hardship and disappointment, the aging, thoroughly disillusioned man finds himself again near the hut of the graveyard hag, broken in spirit and weary of life. His eyes have begun to open to the fact that he threw away his happiness when he should have held it fast. He grasps the whole truth when the queen appears on the scene, full of love and forgiveness. Now when his course is nearly run he realizes that he has misspent his life in the childish pursuit of a bubble. In order at last to cast off the spell which he now regards as the source of his failure, he throws the third feather into the fire. As the flames blaze over the mystic plume the queen sinks to the ground dying. And with the cry "*Du warst's!*" Witte breaks down over her body.

We do not fail to notice a certain parallel between this play and the tragedy of John the Baptist. Both men are led into destruction by a false idealism. As John still looks expectantly for the coming of the gold-clad Messiah when all the while Christ in his spiritual glory is walking on earth, so Prince Witte consumes himself in the idle search after that which he already possesses, —

the magnanimous love of a perfect woman. "The Three Heron-Plumes" is a work of great poetic merit. And yet, despite its many beauties, it is, on the whole, Sudermann's least successful work, if we except his latest, *Der Sturmgesele Sokrates*, compared to which everything else he has ever written is a masterpiece. Versatile though he is to an unusual degree, his genius is hardly adapted to romance and fairy tale. Sudermann is too much a man of the modern world, too much a Northerner and a Prussian. As he, possibly more than any other writer of the new generation, draws intellectual breath from the atmosphere of criticism which pervades our times, he is at his best when dealing with those questions which have the greatest moral actuality, and with which it is consequently wholly legitimate and proper that the modern play and the modern novel should mostly concern themselves.

The plays which still remain for discussion afford Sudermann that opportunity. The first bears the symbolic name *Johannisfeuer* ("St. John's Fire") (1900). The meaning of the symbolism in the play is made clear by the following declamatory outpouring of the leading male character. "In every one of us there smolders

a spark of heathenism. This has outlasted the thousands of years since the old Germanic times. Once a year it bursts into a high flame and then it is called *Johannisfeuer*. Once a year there comes a night of liberty. Yes, yes, a night of liberty. Then the witches ride with mocking laughter up the Brocken on their broomsticks, the same broomsticks with which at other times their witchcraft is cudgeled out of them. Then the Wild Chase passes over the forest; then awaken in our hearts the wild desires which life has not fulfilled and which, mark me well, it could not fulfill. For no matter what be the name of the law that for the time happens to rule in the world,—in order that the *one* wish may be realized by whose grace we can spin out our existence, a thousand other wishes must perish miserably: some, possibly, because they were forever unattainable, others—well, others because we have allowed them to flit away like wild birds over which our hand was too slow in closing. . . . Be this as it may, once a year comes the night when we are free, and do you know what it is that blazes yonder? do you know? / It is the phantoms of our deadened desires; it is the red plumage of the birds of paradise which

perhaps we might have cherished all our life long, and which have taken wing from us; it is the old chaos; it is the heathenism within us. And be we never so happy in the sunshine and according to law,—this is St. John's Eve. To its old heathen fires I pledge my glass; this night may they blaze high and higher.<sup>1</sup>—Will no one touch glasses with me?" (act iii, scene iii). We can well understand why, after this somewhat extravagant tirade of Georg von Hartwig, an embarrassing silence ensues round the board of Squire Vogelreuter. This is broken at last by the heroine, Marikke, who with trembling hand touches her glass to Georg's as she says "I will," and looks him firmly in the eye.

In two breasts the fire of St. John breaks out in this play, which ends tragically enough. Though its pages flow not with blood, yet two lives—herein lies the tragedy—are consumed as a sacrifice savory in the nostrils of that ruling power, the law,—the morals which "happen for the time to rule the world."

Ethically considered, the play may or may not mark a step in the direction of the author's

<sup>1</sup> The pun on *Hoch*, the customary ending of a German toast, is lost in the Englishing.

philosophic reconciliation with that power. That would depend on the interpretation of the outcome. Dramatically considered, it certainly gives no proof of advance. The play suffers from the fact that Sudermann has this time yielded too freely to his strong liking for effects. Certain melodramatic elements, called in merely for decorative purposes, have unfortunately sneaked into the inner mechanism of "St. John's Fire." These ornamental features include more than the *double entendre* in the name of the play, the importation of symbolical illustrations, and notably the factitious interspersions of the dialogue with bits from the author's commentary on his own work, such as we hear in *Die Ehre* from Count Trast, and in *Sodoms Ende* from Dr. Weisse and Professor Riemann, or in *Die Schmetterlingsschlacht* from the invaluable Kessler.

With these, on the whole, we need have no quarrel in a dramatist who does not pose as a naturalist and probably has no special aptitude in that direction. [The ideal drama, of course, should be self-explanatory.] But even greater playwrights than Sudermann — and that is saying not a little — have fallen back on the same devices as he. Within æsthetic limits a writer is privileged to

introduce *Stimmungsmittel*, that is to superinduce artificially the effect of his work. At most we may raise an objection against his almost insulting plainness in the explanation of things that are sufficiently clear in themselves. Georg's toast certainly verges dangerously on the *haec fabula docet*. Besides, the parallelism between fact and symbol need not be accentuated so much throughout the drama. The story gains nothing in probability from the circumstance that the outbreak of Georg's and Marikke's mutual infatuation is made simultaneous with the bonfires of St. John's Eve. It is sufficiently dramatic in its true inwardness. The picture could have well dispensed with the excessive ornament of its symbolic frame. Let that pass. But Sudermann, as was said above, goes to obnoxious lengths in touching up the sober tragedy of this play with melodramatic effects. He ransacks the Thespian van of itinerant barn-stormers, where he discovers his female tramp, the *Weszkalnene*. He stirs up the lumber room of Italian opera and culls a meaning reference to the fatal Mancheneel-tree of Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*. He even plants an exotic tree of his own, the *Liriodendron Tulipifera* of the second act, and he shows half a mind to turn its blossoms

to tragic account ; but remembering, it may be, that he himself has done his share towards destroying the credit of fate-bringing vegetables and similar stage properties, he happily desists from the purpose. For after the flowering twig is dropped and the tarred barrels are burnt out, real forces, potent and plausible, are seen to be responsible for the sequel.

First of all is the moral organization of the two central figures, their temperament, by which their fall and fate are predetermined. Here it is heredity that reveals itself as nowhere else in Sudermann's plays. Georg comes of a masterful race, hence he belongs to the "*Herrenmenschen*," albeit he is a weak specimen of this strong modern genus. Marikke, on the other hand, being the daughter of a drunken, thievish beggar woman, it follows, according to Sudermann's theory of the transmission of traits, that she must steal. But whereas the old Lithuanian wretch, her mother, is principally out for food and underclothing, the daughter — what a singular form of kleptomania! — cannot resist an impulse to steal her portion of happiness. *Meine Mutter stiehlt. Ich stehle auch!* It is with these words that she throws herself away. The sweet,

housewifely girl whom they all call *Heimchen* ("the cricket on the hearth"), and who, though a poor foundling, has been tenderly reared by the Vogelreuters, is driven to her ruin by a mingled feeling of love, sensual impulse, generosity, and — this is the element incongruous with the general view of her character — reckless, fatalistic insouciance. The outlines of these two principal characters as sketched in by the author are plainly discernible. Unfortunately the figures do not fit themselves to the contours. Georg has no true kinship with the "Master Folk." At bottom he is a boastful, vacillating, and selfish philistine. This, his real nature, is not disclosed to those about him, nor to himself, — if at least the playwright saw through him! But we have the feeling that such is not the case, hence our own puzzled state. It must be admitted that just as there are inscrutable characters in life, so certain dramatic characters of great depth, like Hamlet, Faust, Wallenstein, baffle offhand interpretation. As a rule, however, the character that fails to body forth unquestionably the author's real conception is to be regarded as a dramatic miscarriage.

Beside the not altogether adequate accounting for the tragedy through the driving force of

congenital character, there is put in commission an auxiliary course of events which leads the principals straight to the trapdoor of destiny. Georg von Hartwig is, like Marikke, a *Notstandskind* laid under an oppressive debt of gratitude. After his father's suicide Georg has been educated through the generosity of his uncle Vogelreuter. While yet a schoolboy he has fallen in love with Marikke. She, however, has not realized the depth of his affection for her, and he has imagined himself scorned. The play opens four days prior to the marriage of Georg to Trude Vogelreuter, a sweet, clinging damosel with a heartful of love and a thimbleful of brains. The match, as far as Georg is concerned, is to be conceived partly as a requital of past benefits received from his uncle, and partly as a *mariage de défi*, to spite the Heimchen. The dramatic argumentation of both points, however, is unsupported by cogent evidence. We only learn that in those past days Marikke has repelled with natural pride the demonstrations of the youngster's callow affection. So, for instance, one day when he followed her into the cellar she managed to lock the ardent lover in for a whole night, with the hope, possibly, of reducing his spirits to the temperature

and harmlessness of the milk stored there. After that the facile psychologist considered his fate as sealed. "And since things had come to such a pass that I could not get you," he explains in act iii, "I afterward took Trude." Then this brilliant reader of the feminine mind adds, wonderingly, "Have you never realized that this was the way things hung together?" At the critical moment, when the Heimchen's repressed temperament is set aflame by the reappearance of Georg, two events ripen the catastrophe: the discovery of Georg's early love for her through some boyish poetry that turns up in an old drawer; and the arrival of her mother, the dissolute Weszkalnene, by which Marikke is thrown into a state of the utmost self-depreciation.

Marikke, then, "steals" her bit of happiness, but magnanimously rejects Georg's half-hearted offer to break off the marriage with Trude. It is at this point that the internal dramatic workings seem leavened with the ethical policy of the author, in that Georg and Marikke subordinate their love to a tender regard for their responsibilities to the family. The play ends with Georg and Trude going to the altar as if nothing had happened, while Marikke looks after them, her

handkerchief between her teeth to stifle the outcry of her anguish. If there is any "lesson" in this bourgeois ending, it seems to the superficial observer as though it can hardly be other than approbation, for once, of social authority, and a rebuff for insubordination of the individual. A play with such a message would seem to show the author of "Magda" and "Honor" in the attitude either of a convert or of a renegade. Before we jump to such a rash conclusion, however, it is well to pause before two other possibilities. May it not be that the ending of the play is either a grim satire or an uninterpreted illustration of reality? The last is certainly the least probable, for we have seen heretofore that Sudermann is not in the habit of keeping back his opinion. *Johannisfeuer* is weaker than it would be if this large question were not left open. Yet even now, if we look in some detail at the remainder of Sudermann's recent works, they may help to disclose the real meaning of this one.

The moral tone of the tragedy *Es lebe das Leben* ("The Joy of Living") (1902) argues conclusively against a radical change of front in the current ethical phase of Sudermann's literary activity.

Its burden is the exaltation of a life intense and personal over the drag of an existence conducted by rule of thumb in the interest and for the convenience of the species. Yet Sudermann indorses very positively the just claims of society upon the individual. There is abundant happiness to be found beyond the pale of the law, but the purchase price is so high, fortunately, as to frighten off all but a few.

For the first time Sudermann in "The Joy of Living" takes us into German high life. Count Kellinghausen, prominent member of the conservative party, has laid down his electoral mandate and used all his influence for the election of his friend, Baron Richard von Völkerlingk. The sacrifice of his own political preferment has been made at the prompting of his wife, Beate, who is the Egeria of the party, and at whose table, "*entre poire et fromage*," the fate of many a parliamentary bill has been sealed. She has persuaded Count Michael of his own unfitness for parliamentary life, and has convinced him that the highest interest of the party demands that he decline his reëlection in favor of his more brilliant friend. Under her wise direction Richard von Völkerlingk has fully developed his rare political

powers. His son Norbert, under the same influence, has matured into an earnest sociological thinker. Norbert loves Countess Beate better than his own mother and is tacitly accepted as the prospective husband of her daughter Ellen. The love of the young people only supplies the rather hackneyed underplot. The pivotal figures of the main plot are Richard von Völkerlingk and Beate von Kellinghausen. They have known each other for fifteen years. From the start they have been intimate friends, soon becoming lovers. To the quiet little woman that Beate used to be, Richard's superior mind has unlocked the wealth of a new and larger life; under his guidance she has grown to be a woman of strength and purpose, able to repay in kind by becoming a wise counselor to Richard, and forming the character of his boy. Their culpable relations have mellowed after a short time into a fraternal affection, a soul companionship from which both draw the courage to continue their lives. Beate's ambition dreams of a great future for Richard, and because she cannot bear to see his talents lying fallow, she creates the opportunity for him to exercise them. Richard's conscience naturally recoils from so great an indebtedness to the man

whom he has betrayed. But he has yielded to Beate's persuasion and has just been returned to Parliament. In the impending debate on the divorce question he is to raise his voice as the chief spokesman of his party in defense of the sacredness and indissolubility of marriage. His sense of honor is greatly disturbed at this; he is not a man who can make shift with the assumption that people will be guided by his public words, not by his secret actions. He feels that whatever he says in his political capacity should be uttered without an inward contradiction. Withal he is heart and soul in his task. The suggestion of a tragical ending arises spontaneously. Richard may appear as the champion of morals but once. By a great speech he may decide the victory of the cause. Then in the midst of his triumph he may certify to its truthfulness by his death. To a fecund inventor of plots like Sudermann this single thread seemed too slender, so it is reënforced by a political intrigue and at the same time by the frustration of Richard's suicide through the ingenious self-sacrifice of Beate. For her action, of course, the author must furnish a strong motive, and thus Beate becomes from this point on the real heroine of the play.

Count Michael is accidentally informed of what he firmly believes to be a groundless defamation of his house, and decides to punish the slanderer. He has perfect confidence in his wife and his friend, but lest some triviality be puffed up into a serious accusation against them, he wants to know if they have any recollection of any detail in their mutual relations which might lend the slightest color of truth to the charge of undue intimacy. Finally he asks for Richard's word of honor that nothing need be feared in the way of evidence. Thus very unexpectedly the climax is brought on. Richard starts to "perjure himself like a gentleman," but Beate prevents. "Now he will give you his word of honor and then he will go home and put a bullet through his head." At this moment she stakes, nay more than that, she surrenders her all in order that Richard may again be at one with himself, once the great lie is ousted from his life. And she explains to her husband in this confession scene why she has lived the lie at his side for half a lifetime. Suppose she had obtained her freedom, and Richard his too, would she not have completed the wrecking of his life if she had stuck to him as the relic of a past scandal? Count Michael von Kellinghausen, after

this crushing exposure, is not in a position to exact the customary satisfaction; the playwright has crossed his purpose, for reason. Before Michael entered upon the prosecution of the slanderer he had to pledge his word to his political friends that the party should be carefully protected against the taint of scandal. Accordingly a settlement between him and Richard in conformity with the ordinary rules of the code of honor is practically impossible. By a dramatic *coup de force* Völkerlingk junior much earlier in the play has unwittingly pronounced sentence of death on his father. Being the author of a pamphlet on the question of dueling which evinced a liberal tendency quite at variance with the views of his social circle, he was upholding the thesis of his pamphlet against Count Michael and Baron Richard, who both maintained, from different positions, that in certain cases, when irreparable offense has been given, gentlemen must appeal their dispute to the decision of arms. Norbert expressed the opinion that the offender, if he be a man of honor and willing to make atonement, would do best to act as his own judge.

The two men now fall back on Norbert's verdict. Richard takes a reprieve of forty-eight hours

to arrange his affairs in a way to leave no clew to the motive of his suicide.

The dramatic problem in the last two acts is to bring the affair to a conclusion in such a manner that Beate's great sacrifice shall not have been in vain. The tremendous effect of Völkerlingk's speech on the sanctity of marriage has opened before him the possibilities of a career than which no living man has achieved a more splendid; a career which nothing but a scandal can blast. He is universally regarded as the coming man. Beate realizes that Richard has paid, with his resolution to die, for the right to speak as he has on that subject, and she also knows that by his first great success life has been endeared to him, and he is full of a secret avidity to live. Her mind is made up to save him. Her own life, in constant jeopardy on account of heart disease, seems to her a more suitable sacrifice. If she dies, so Beate calculates, Völkerlingk is bound to live in order to save her reputation and the happiness of the young couple. She induces her husband to invite Richard to a gentlemen's gathering so as to nip in the bud any rumors of a scandal. Then she secures Richard's promise to attend.

In the fifth act, which is marred by some glaring theatricalities, Count Kellinghausen's breakfast party is represented. Beate, who is the only woman present, proposes a somewhat exorbitant toast to the joy of living. With the words "*Es lebe das Leben!*" she drains a poisoned cup. A letter left behind explains to her husband the purpose of her death. Michael and Richard now realize that their covenant is void. Richard may—nay, must—live, and Michael offers no opposition to the union of Ellen and Norbert. And yet it cannot be asserted that the end of Beate's self-destroying act is wholly attained. "And you understand"—these are the closing words of Richard to Michael—"that I must live, though I do not care to—must live—because I am dead. Farewell."

Nearly all the characters in "The Joy of Living" are conventionalized, a fact which explains in a great measure the friendly acceptance of the play in England and the United States, where the public shows such conservative aversion to the admission of strangers into stage land. The heroine, however, forms a notable exception.

The Countess Beate, who has become a favorite star part for traveling tragediennes, is not the sole

specimen of her kind. On the contrary, she belongs to a numerous sisterhood. Nevertheless she has a personal note which separates her from the magnanimous adventuresses of French drama, and from all the heroines of Ibsen, and Pinero, and Sudermann himself. She is distinguished by a consuming "will to live," in gratifying which she is not hampered, as is her lover, by any moral scruples. In the words of Thomas Carlyle, / she conquers remorse by avoiding it. This is not to say that she is without a moral conscience; rather she has one all her own. By the code of morals which as social and political beings we confess, the Countess Beate von Kellinghausen stands condemned, and not even by her many good deeds can she be recommended to mercy. Yet inasmuch as it is our laudable custom to relax the check upon our generous impulses when viewing conduct not in life but on the stage, the Rhadamanthine judgment on the sinning Beate softens greatly before the pleadings of her palliating traits. She is guilty beyond a doubt, and her guilt is largely aggravated by her remorseless, jubilant spirit. In this she is of the Nietzschean mold, and resembles Magda pointing out with shocking pride the connection between her trespasses and

her vital sense of freedom. Beate, indeed, cherishes a passionate love of life in its rich and variegated fullness. But she loves it not only for what it holds for herself: she is even ready to fling her own share away in order to secure for her best beloved a greater participation in the joy of living. She has been so far a seeker after happiness for others that when we examine the portion that she has kept for herself it will be found to consist in the self-imposed martyrdom of love. And so, with the footlights marking off a safe distance between Beate and ourselves, since it seems that human compassion must keep a distance, "her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much." "The Joy of Living" has been treated here at greater length than many of Sudermann's plays. The reason was partly the success that play has experienced on the English as well as on the German stage, and partly the fact of its being an important document in Sudermann's ethics.

It confirms, in a sense, the moral individualism observed throughout his career as a writer. At the same time it shows a fair acquiescence in the restraint put upon individual conduct by the common agreement of society. However elating Beate's joy of living, the wages of her sin, after

all, is death. The two sentiments, as has been already mentioned, are not necessarily contradictory. [Sudermann, to put it plainly, was from the beginning, and has remained to this day, a believer in the exception by which the rule is proved.]

Whenever a contemporary writer who has shown the strength requisite to divide public opinion as to his true importance passes through the temporary eclipse of a real failure, a self-constituted coroner's jury of his enemies will inevitably pronounce him dead from exhaustion. They knew all the while, it goes without saying, that he was growing decrepit; that his triumphs were only the galvanic signs of life produced by ingenious self-advertisement; they had predicted that sooner or later the bottom would be knocked out of the workbox from which came all the flimflam of his cheap effects. They had looked forward with alacrity to the future which would bear out their forecast that the reputation of the writer in question was wholly evanescent.

In Germany more than in any other country great importance is attached to questions of literature; consequently a writer like Sudermann cannot wonder at having a multitude of critics.

Without invoking the apologetic *Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus*, it may be said in a spirit of justice that no attitude on the part of a critic can be more petty and unfair towards an earnestly striving artist than the malignant appraisal of his worth on the basis of the least creditable of his performances. Hermann Sudermann has been signally unsuccessful with his last play, the comedy / *Der Sturmgesele Sokrates* (1903). That even his staunchest adherents will have to admit. And the failure was not confined to a single feature of the play; the entire work in regard to structure, form, and substance, plot, language, and characters is past saving. Worst of all, the spirit in which it is written is to be unequivocally condemned. \ *Der Sturmgesele Sokrates* is a libelous caricature on the lofty political idealism that inspired the so-called *Völkerfrühling*, the outbreak of the German love of liberty in the year 1848. The story of the play not really being worth the telling, it is sufficient to touch upon its main points. In a small East Prussian city, by which is doubtless meant Tilsit, there exists in the middle of the seventies a club called *Die Sturmgesele*, "the Fellow Stormers." It is composed of five or six old-time chums, nearly all eccentric and wrong-headed

old codgers, who meet once a week in a dingy public house and pass the evening with beer, tobacco, and political drivel. They are the innocuous remnant of a secret society founded in the early fifties, soon after the suppression of the revolution, one of the many which in the period of reaction kept alive clandestinely the democratic hopes. The solemn absurdities of this obsolete conspiracy are kept up with ludicrous punctiliousness. The puerility of the old Fellow Stormers is not without its touch of pathos. While they still throw around at a lively rate their high-sounding balderdash about liberty, equality, and fraternity, their political creed has gone out of date and lost its meaning, and they appear to be blind to the fact that a new era has realized many of their ancient dreams. So far so good. The ludicrous yet touching loyalty to the moribund idols of one's generous youth might have proved a fruitful theme for a serio- or even a tragi-comic play. And such an one was probably in the author's mind. Unfortunately Sudermann committed a double error. In the first place, he took the *tempora mutantur* altogether for granted and emphasized unduly the *et nos mutamur* in his characterization of the *Sturmgesellen*, by making

them out, with a single exception, as a set of thorough-paced idiots and hypocrites. Their conduct is for the most part utterly inconsistent with their professed high principles, besides being discreditable to their intellects. One of them is a sordid timeserver; another, a scandalous rake; the third, a malicious intriguer; the fourth, and relatively most relishable of the company, Rabbi Markuse, is an amiable enough person and fairly well-conducted citizen, but childishly self-indulgent in little things and, although he poses as a modernized Nathan the Wise, a coward before public opinion. To show up by such farcical examples the wide discrepancy between profession and practice of the men of '48 is like waving the red flag in the faces of the survivors of the revolution. The other error, however, is of a still graver nature. In the fifth of the *Fellow Stormers*, Dentist Hartmeyer, who has the principal part, the old-time idealism burns on with undiminished fervor, and Sudermann, by making this one the most preposterous among the fantasts, with his objectless, querulous enthusiasm and quixotic lack of common sense, lays a hurtful finger on a very sensitive spot in the national consciousness of his countrymen. The German people are rightly

proud of their idealism. It is bad form and bitterly unjust for Sudermann to hold up the old ideals of '48 to the scorn of the modern generation. It is difficult to see what good turn can be served either the human or the national cause by a political comedy which seems to point out the harrowing lesson that democracy is half villainy, half folly. And the representatives of the new epoch, the sons of the Fellow Stormers, being with one exception contemptible and vicious, are not calculated to show that vigorous ideals of any sort, old or new, serve as lodestars for the guidance of the men who are young to-day in Imperial Germany. One might condone the pessimism shown in the historical retrospect in spite of its indiscreet expression. *Der Katzensteg* contained the proof that such dissent from the generally accepted patriotic tradition may go hand in hand with a confidence in the existence of a truly efficacious national idealism. But to judge from *Der Sturmgesele Sokrates* it almost looks as though, in a fit of disgust, Sudermann had shifted his moral perspective. To the defense raising its faint voice here and there and offering the objection that *Der Sturmgesele Sokrates* must not be received as an attack on cherished national ideals there

is but one answer. The ethics of every drama must stand trial on their plain appearances, nothing else.

After this outspoken condemnation of Sudermann's latest play a warning will be in place that we should not lend a serious ear to his obdurate detractors. It would simplify the study of a great writer if ethical and æsthetic development were necessarily following a straight line up or down. As a rule, however, great writers are so constituted or circumstanced that an occasional slipping back from their path of ascent or a not too frequent recrudescence into a past phase of endeavor need not be taken as a symptom of decay. We must let them take their own time and their own way to reach the summit of their art. Thus as in conclusion we sum up the results of Sudermann's work during this decade and a half of his rich literary activity, we may in good faith eliminate from the estimate the two or three books that are distinctly inferior in value to the rest of the imposing series.

The art of Hermann Sudermann, notwithstanding the range of its capabilities, is fundamentally simple in its character. Its purpose is direct, its form clearly defined, incisive, at times lapidary.

It is an art that reposes on a well-poised, full-orbed, full-veined personality. His failures refute the groundless charge that Sudermann truckles to the dominant literary taste of the hour. He fashions from a deep artist's conscience and out of the fullness of a strong outspoken temperament. Again and again he has been reviled as a mechanical imitator of the French *salon*-dramatists. It is perfectly certain and greatly to his credit that he has learned much from older and contemporary masters, both in respect to the general principles and the minor managements of dramatic art. Why should not an artist, in order to reach a higher position, mount on the shoulders of eminent predecessors? It is not true, however, that Sudermann has schooled his craftsmanship exclusively after the French pattern. The fact is, he studied in the same places as most of his competitors, but he has proved himself an apter pupil. / To Ibsen and Björnson he owes probably more than to any other living writers for the technic, the subject-matter, and even the ethics of his works. Undoubtedly he has, besides, acquired constructive details from the older school of French dramatists, maybe he has also been influenced by them in giving room to some of those

things which for the lack of a better word we must term with his detractors "theatricalities." Spielhagen may be right in claiming for Count Trast a lineal descent from the Count of Monte Cristo. Yet with rare exceptions these "theatricalities" are not used as a claptrap for a gullible public, for it should be remembered that Sudermann writes for a nation to whom the drama is something far higher than a mere "show." They are in all likelihood the spontaneous outflow of a dramatic disposition. On the whole Sudermann indulges with discretion his natural propensity for the spectacular. As an instance, take the reception prepared for the prima donna Maddalena dall'Orto (Magda) in a city which may constructively be called Königsberg, the capital of East Prussia. The streets and houses are decked with garlands, rugs, and flags; crowds surge in front of her house, and so forth. These things do not pass on the scene and therefore cannot enhance the stage effect of the play, but they betray the author's penchant for picturesque exaggeration to which he yields now and then when he thinks himself unobserved. Examples of the same kind might easily be multiplied. Theatrical rather than dramatic are likewise the ablegates, as we have

called them, or mouthpieces of the author's private opinion. In the novels as well as in the plays there is a superfluity of speech-making and other declamation. There is also in both kinds of works a regular return of the "grand scene." But these things which fly in the face of naturalism do not constitute, as the enemies would have it, a cardinal dramaturgic vice of Sudermann. They merely prove that he aspires to no high place among the naturalists.

A play or a novel may be lifelike without being true to life. Sudermann is less concerned with external accuracy than with internal truth. The things which he depicts on the stage and in the pages of his books are not soulless copies from life, nor yet are they, on the other hand, mere inventions of the imagination. They are fragments of his own inner experience, composed and interpreted for others. Herein consists the convincing power of his art. He has had the courage from the beginning to brave the naturalistic despotism, and to hold out for the conviction that, as Amiel has it in his *Journal intime*, "the ideal, after all, is truer than the real; for the ideal is the eternal element in perishable things: it is their type, their sum, their *raison d'être*, their formula in the book of

the Creator, and therefore at once the most exact and the most condensed expression of them." For this reason it is that such figures as the plodding Paul Mayhöfer, the robust Leo von Sellenthin, the feline Adah Barczinowsky, the blond serpent Felicitas von Kletzing, or the roughshod, blustering, golden-hearted Squire Vogelreuter, and many another figure of Sudermann's are more than ephemeral creations. They are lasting contributions to the history of contemporary morals and manners, and therefore may be fairly ranked with such imperishable products of the writer's art as Captain Dobbin, Rawdon Crawley, the Marquis of Steyne, or even the incomparable Becky Sharp herself. Though comparisons in the domain of literature are especially odious, yet one feels strongly tempted to spin out somewhat further the comparison between Sudermann and England's greatest novelist, Thackeray. The stinging lash swung by both is in appointed hands; it is wielded by righteous indignation in the name of a higher morality. And that is good additional reason why we pardon Sudermann's occasional undramatic preachments. He is not an artist for art's sake alone; he is also a vigorous reformer. Yet again like Thackeray, he is not

perpetually plying the scourge of scathing sarcasm. He is also richly endowed with real benignant humor, a gift of the gods which no great writer can spare, and one which can make even an out-and-out realist almost endurable.

The art of Sudermann is simple also in that it applies itself almost invariably to a single group of problems. The keynote to the great majority of his works is the world-old conflict which is daily bred anew in the life of a progressive people: // the tragic struggle between the old and the new; between the pious clinging of the soul to long-recognized creeds and the imperious claims of a nascent era.

In his attitude towards these grave questions Sudermann is consistently conservative so far as the general status of society is concerned; he is liberal, radical, nay anarchistic, in his pleas for special cases. Yet he is not stubbornly marking time on the standpoint of any one doctrine. We find, on the contrary, in his dramatic career the evidences of a growing, maturing, and refining philosophy. Roughly speaking, three phases may be distinguished. / At first, the class conflict *per se* is in the foreground, the fates of the individuals are of secondary interest. The type of these

dramas is *Die Ehre*. In that play the final destinies of Robert and Lenore, Alma and Kurt, are disposed of with a nonchalant wave of the hand. The most interesting part of *Die Ehre* is the perambulating social commentary of the author, here represented by the Count von Trast-Saarberg.

It is not long, however, before the major sympathies of Sudermann are transferred from the sociologic class phenomena in the abstract to the concrete, living individual. The first play of this second phase is "Magda." The connection with the teachings of Friedrich Nietzsche is obvious. The highest duty of the exceptional type is to cultivate its true genius, regardless of the statutes and by-laws of society. The exceptional man or woman must therefore follow the pathfinding instinct. Such is the prime consideration. The most sacred bonds must be severed as soon as they become a hindrance to the free unfolding of individuality. At the same time, genius may not, after defying the conventions and thus securing its own higher form of happiness, expect to participate with equal shares in the happy lot of the throng. Thus every genius is placed in the ancient Sapphic dilemma.

There is a third class of plays by Sudermann representing a yet higher stage of ethical conception. A person may be at the same time sovereignly independent and sovereignly unselfish. *Teja* is an apotheosis of civic martyrdom, *Johannes* a glorification of the gospel of love. Marikke, too, and Beate in their way show their strength not so much in self-assertion as in self-abnegation.

And it may be that Sudermann as an ethicist has not yet spoken his final and decisive word. At any rate, so far as his social plays are concerned, his work up to the present time shows him only twice as the reckless satirist, in *Sodoms Ende*, where he puts profligacy into the pillory, and in *Der Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, meant as a warning either against false idealism or against want of idealism. At all other times Sudermann maintains the helpful attitude of a sober, determined reformer. He handles his chosen problems not, as so many modern writers do, for the sake of pleasing the caprice of a frivolous public, nor to gratify any morbid curiosity or idiosyncrasy of his own, but because they have come to distinct public consciousness, and because he personally is deeply stirred by them. As a novelist he has reached true greatness. In the drama he falls

short of it because his strong pedagogic bent warps his plots from their natural course, not letting fate arise wholly out of the characters, and because, moreover, in his plays the horizon of the "idea" and the circle of action are not always coextensive.

Nevertheless, if we have outgrown that pedantic narrowness which approves or disapproves of a writer in proportion as he happens to agree or disagree with our own views of things, and if in judging him we turn from the sundry crudities and blemishes of which hardly any work of art can be wholly free, and fix our attention on his honest aims and high merits, we shall gladly acknowledge Hermann Sudermann as one of the foremost exponents of the modern novel and drama.



MODERN  
GERMAN LITERATURE  
GERHART HAUPTMANN



## GERHART HAUPTMANN

A census taken at any time during the past decade or so to determine whom the present generation regards as the greatest living dramatist of Germany would result beyond a peradventure in the overwhelming triumph of Gerhart Hauptmann.

How much this well-nigh unanimous judgment may portend for Hauptmann's ultimate position in German and European literature, how much or how little warrant there is for already assigning to him a well-defined historic personality, will be a matter for speculation until the literary or cultural movement to which his works and his fame owe their origin shall have receded from the field of blurred contemporaneous vision and appear to the eye in the distinctness of historic perspective.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the general appreciation of Hauptmann signifies for our own time the victorious penetration of certain æsthetic principles into the art conception

of a vast majority of the Germans. These principles, which may be summed up in the well-known term "naturalism," came into vogue, so far as Germany is concerned, about fifteen years ago, at first among a small group of young writers. Before they had spread so widely as finally to win for the new art gospel wide circles of society high and low, they had undergone a number of modifications, the leading writers of the school passing through an almost radical change in their artistic conviction. It is evident to us at this distance that the extreme naturalism of Hauptmann's first play in 1889 represents merely a played-out episode in the consistent movement of the modern drama towards greater truthfulness. The abiding service of naturalism to the higher realism into which it is now merged consists in the accomplished reunion of dramatic art with actual life after a long and disastrous period of separation. In its results this reunion means no less than that the theater to-day occupies in the national consciousness of the Germans a place such as throughout the history of mankind it has been known to command only once before, at the time when Greek tragedy was in its flower. To convert a place for the entertainment of the well-to-do

lazy into a serious institution for the deepening of the public art intelligence it was needful to work a series of reforms. Already the method had been laid out by Emile Zola in his *Le Roman expérimental*, by which the epic form of letters was to be brought into an organic touch with life. By the same or a closely similar prescription the drama was now to be remade. The naturalists felt that the drama should be a reproduction of the actual, unaltered by any embellishment or idealistic additions of any kind. Hence it is necessary to learn to observe the actual in a scientific way; and as the phenomena under scrutiny are manifestations of organic life, the naturalistic dramatist should strive to fathom them by methods akin to those employed in the biologic pursuits. However, the most painstaking registration of data does not produce a drama, because the social processes are too composite and slow-working for the limited possibilities of the stage, and too subtle for the offhand comprehension of the public. So, by analogy of natural science, the dramatists segregate relatively small groups of factors and study experimentally their mutual reactions. This at least is their theory, and here is not the place to combat the fallacy which it harbors.

Two corollaries of this alleged scientific method have to be mentioned: The "passion of veracity" implies the preponderance of the commonplace in the looks and acts of the characters and notably in their speech, and thus makes among other things the use of dialect and jargon indispensable. The environment of each individual must be accurately rendered; hence a mass of epic detail is conveyed through the medium of stage directions, which thus become an intrinsic part of the play. It was on the perfection of these and other technical matters that naturalism at first took its stand; the higher object of the drama was wholly submerged under its minutiae.

This higher object for the naturalist was to show through a multiplicity of examples that man's destiny is unalterably shaped by his inherited character in conjunction with his environment; human fate proceeds from a parallelogram of forces extrinsic rather than volitional. So much, in passing, for the naturalistic creed. However, even the author of *Le Roman expérimental*, the gospel of the naturalists, had declared that art is a segment of the world seen through a temperament. In truth, the temperamental or subjective coloring can never be absent from a work of art.

So far as it goes, it will set apart the work of one writer from the work of all others. For this reason we find that with his peculiarly lyric temperament it is no easy task for Hauptmann, even in the beginning of his career as a dramatist, to conform strictly to the tenets of the new art code, and that occasionally he breaks away altogether from allegiance to the school.

In the preceding chapter Sudermann was described as a writer of the masculine type. Hauptmann is the opposite. Sudermann's pen is guided by a theory of life. Hauptmann apparently has not yet evolved one for himself. Whenever he departs from the visible model and follows either an imaginative or a speculative bent, it at once becomes apparent that his poetry is not moored to a definite, consistent philosophy. Hauptmann as a thinker, say in *Einsame Menschen* or *Die versunkene Glocke*, is handicapped by the same intense impressibility that enables him in *Die Weber* or *Der Biberpelz* to show among all his contemporaries the greatest skill in the art of accurate and minute *milieu* painting. The specific nature of his prodigious lyric gifts, notably the lilting melody of his verse, which so often asserts itself triumphantly over the doctrinal

veto, springs from a decadent predisposition. The much-abused word decadent is to be taken not at all in a sinister meaning, but to denote a state of overrefinement manifesting itself in a subtle yet sterile receptivity, brooding pensiveness, and — perhaps the chief criterion — in a certain debility of the volitional energy, which leaves this poet in a condition of tormenting doubt on major questions of life, and which even in his pursuit of an art ideal makes him seem vacillating and visionary. Hauptmann, too, is apparently as incapable of the higher self-discipline as are his heroes. With his peculiar mental and temperamental equipment he might well have become the foremost lyricist of his generation. When he leaves free rein to his poetic fancy (as here and there already in *Hannele* and throughout *Die versunkene Glocke*) he gives being to poems of exquisite beauty, veritable asphodel blossoms, fragrant with a delicate and melancholy sweetness.

More than that, there is a fine lyric quality in all of Hauptmann's plays, a *Stimmungszauber* unmatched by any other modern dramatist; even the most crassly naturalistic among them, *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, contains one such scene of great beauty. In this power of drawing the spectator

at will into the mood of the play lies Hauptmann's real strength. It is not, however, for his lyric genius but as a dramatist pure and simple that Hauptmann is worshiped by his contemporaries. And with the exception of an epic (later withdrawn from the book market), a few desultory novel fragments, a number of wholly unknown poems, and a couple of short stories, his published work consists of a long and altogether remarkable series of plays. Like most continental writers of to-day Hauptmann craves the quick and tumultuous response of the living generation. This may be secured only in the theater. So Hauptmann writes plays, and through a natural fallacy of public opinion he has been proclaimed Germany's greatest living dramatist. Yet it may be severely questioned whether he should be considered for that place of honor. A dramatic writer may be a great poetic genius and an indifferent maker of plays. Had Goethe given us nothing else but *Faust* we should nevertheless accord him readily the first position among modern poets; but should we in that case be justified in calling Goethe the greatest modern dramatist just because *Faust* is cast in the dramatic form?

Judged by a just dramaturgic standard, Hauptmann is deficient in three essentials. In the first place, he is weak as regards his dynamics. The characters are stationary, incapable of any real development. In a certain way they are very true to life, thanks to their author's prodigious power of observation and his absorbing attention to detail. They are gotten up regardless of pains. Not the wart on the nose, not the speck of dust on the coat, is overlooked. Of the very definite impression their prototypes have made on his eye, Hauptmann renders such accurate account that when his men and women make their first appearance their verisimilitude elicits our highest admiration. After a while, however, the interest in them flags, owing to their persevering sameness. Neither literally nor figuratively do they ever change their clothes. They evolve no new ideas from within, they admit none from the outside, and they never relent in their stubborn adherence to what ideas they happen to possess. The original stock, moreover, with which the author has set them up is so limited as to constitute another weakness of Hauptmann's plays. For truth to tell, the characters are wanting in ideas chiefly because the author has not much of this commodity to

spare. Now fixed ideas are a dangerous equipment in proportion as they are few in number, and one is tempted to think that the characters in Hauptmann's plays meet their defeat through their own unyielding devotion to the single fixed idea that forms the dramatic viaticum of each. To come to the third defect: Upon the glorious authority of the ancients and of Shakespeare, we feel justified in demanding of a dramatist that in manipulating a theme of his own deliberate choice he shall turn his subject-matter to full account and make the most of the dramatic data it presents. Of this reasonable demand Hauptmann falls short. He does not convert all his metal into coin. His art is imposing but fragmentary. His pieces are counterfeits of life, but for the greater part they are not dramas; each constitutes a series of living pictures succeeding each other without an inevitable causal connection, coming somehow to a stop but often lacking finality.

Naturalism is obviously self-contradictory in that it prohibits poetic eclecticism in the presentment, and at the same time relies upon the selective power of the playwright to pick from a human history a few brief scenes that shall of themselves coalesce into a full drama.

As a matter of fact, the plots of Hauptmann are structurally weak and do not even present a firm and definite outline. This may be a virtue in the eyes of some naturalists, yet the suspicion is strong that it is a virtue made of necessity.

Hauptmann is not primarily cut out for a dramatist. But there is a species of drama which is not at all conterminous with life, and in which a first-rate poet may excel even without any superior dramatic power. Over the domain of the fairy-tale play Hauptmann might wield an absolute sovereignty, were it not for that deep-seated lack of a consistent theory of life which debars him from interpreting the nature and destiny of man through symbolism of the grander stamp.

Hauptmann has up to this time given us fifteen specimens of his dramatic art. Obviously they belong to two essentially different, nay contradictory and hostile, spheres. Between these, however, they are not cleanly divided; for in several of the plays the attempt is made at least to bridge the chasm that separates the worlds of fact and figment. The first six plays, closing with *Kollege Crampton*, are patterned throughout after the extreme naturalistic precept. In *Hannele* the poet swerves aside from this path of unalloyed

naturalism or "verism," to return to it again transiently in *Der Biberpelz* ("The Beaver Coat"). In *Die versunkene Glocke* ("The Sunken Bell") he once more turns into another road and finds the way, so it would seem, to the true sanctum of his genius. But the half dozen plays that have followed "The Sunken Bell" are so evenly divided between the realistic and the idealistic spheres that it would be obviously unfair to regard Hauptmann either any longer as an obdurate disciple of naturalism or as an apostate from its principles. As to the form to be taken by his future works we are not in entire darkness. Yet it is not easy to derive his developmental curve from the analysis of his works in their chronological order, for it is Hauptmann's habit to carry on simultaneously several dramatic works, and the technic of each is to a great extent predetermined by the æsthetic convictions that swayed the author during the nascent stage of the composition, which may lie farther back than the actual beginnings of works published earlier. However, when all is said, an important distinction will be drawn between the naturalism of the earliest plays, which poses as its own excuse, and that of *Fuhrmann Henschel*, *Michael Kramer*, and *Rose Bernd*, which has

become subservient to an ulterior psychological theme supplying to the play its real content. It is wisest to abstain from prophecy. This much, however, it seems safe to predict: Hauptmann will continue to exercise his double talent. He will take his material, on the one hand, from his own experience and acquaintance. Here the dramatic personæ will be imitations of life, without the playwright's deeming it necessary to return to the sickening coarseness of his first effort. On the other hand, he will sojourn from time to time in his beloved fairyland where he feels so much at home. At any rate, it is certain that he will continue to grow in independence and be bound down less and less by the narrow æsthetic code of "Youngest Germany."

Before passing under review the plays of Gerhart Hauptmann in the order of their publication, it seems appropriate to sketch briefly his early personal history previous to his recognition as the leading exponent of realistic drama in Germany. Gerhart Hauptmann was born in 1862 in Obersalzbrunn, a small Silesian watering place, where his father kept at one time the three principal hotels. The hotel keeper Siebenhaar in *Fuhrmann Henschel* is said to be modeled after

Hauptmann's father. The poet's grandfather on the paternal side, who was in his early years a poor linen weaver, also became a well-to-do inn-keeper.<sup>1</sup> On the maternal side as well Hauptmann is a son of the people. In 1874 he was sent to the capital city of Breslau, where he attended the Realschule. To the disappointment of his father, whose business had taken an unprosperous turn, he proved an unsatisfactory student, so that three years later it seemed wise to take him from school and try to make him turn his attention to agriculture. Soon he returned to Breslau, this time to study art, for which he had displayed a promising talent. His chronic rebellion against the discipline of the Royal Art School brought his connection with that institution to an early close. Although not qualified, technically, to enter a university, he was by special act admitted as a student of history at Jena. He was then, at twenty years of age, undecided between following the fine arts or literature as his vocation, and remained in this state of indecision for a number of years. After a few semesters at the university we find him at work, now in his sculptor's studio at Rome,

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it deserves to be noticed, perhaps, that the poet is a "total abstainer" and a professed enemy of strong drink.

now in Germany, drawing and modeling from life. Then again he discovered a still more congenial calling and entered upon a course of conscientious preparation to become an actor. This purpose he had to give up, partly because of an inability to overcome the lisp in his speech. In the meantime he had married, and by his wife's considerable fortune was freed from the anxieties of bread-winning and the necessity for compromise which poverty is so apt to impose on the artist. From 1885 began his relations with the rising literary generation, — he had removed to a place in the vicinity of Berlin, — and about that time also began his career as a writer. Of his first efforts but little has been preserved. As far as can be judged from fragments and snatches, they were not fundamentally at variance with the established literary routine against which his later works were to furnish such a vigorous protest. Therein lies probably one reason why Hauptmann has repudiated these utterances of his early apprenticeship. But most likely the principal reason is the low opinion the author now holds of the artistic worth of those firstlings of his genius. In a lengthy epic poem entitled *Promethidenlos* ("The Fate of the Children of Prometheus") he recorded the

variegated impressions and experiences of a voyage from Hamburg along the western coast of Europe and through the Mediterranean. He had journeyed in the tracks of "Childe Harold," and beyond a doubt his own poem is strongly colored by Byron. The epic, published in 1885, was soon withdrawn from circulation. The few copies that have not been remade into pulp are now high-priced curios of the book world. A collection of lyrics, *Das bunte Buch* ("The Motley Book"), had got as far as the page proof when the obscure publisher went into bankruptcy. The few samples cited by Hauptmann's biographer, Paul Schlenker, are not especially calculated to deepen our regret at the suppression of these verses. Not all, however, are as hopelessly commonplace as the one which commences with the best-known line of Heinrich Heine:

Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten,  
Daß meine Träne rinnt  
Zuweilen, wenn ferne das Läuten  
Der Glocke, der Glocke beginnt.

In 1889 Hauptmann formed the acquaintance of Arno Holz. Holz impressed him very much with his clear, incisive analysis of the literary conditions, and gave him the final impetus

towards "realism," Hauptmann for some time having strongly tended in that direction. Holz and his equally talented friend, Johannes Schlaf, were the joint authors of a number of photographically lifelike sketches named *Papa Hamlet*, after an old play actor who is the subject of the leading story in the collection. This book seemed then to Hauptmann the very acme of consistent naturalism. The lesson it taught him he valued so highly that he dedicated his own first realistic play, which appeared soon after, to "Bjarne P. Holmsen," which was the partnership pen name of Holz and Schlaf. This play of Hauptmann's is called *Vor Sonnenaufgang* ("Before Sunrise"). It appeared in book form in the summer of 1889 and was first performed under the auspices of the *Freie Bühne* ("The Free Theater," a private organization not harassed by censorship) on October 20 of the same year. From this play, which at once divided the play-going public into two camps, dates Hauptmann's fame. Its plot and manner of presentation struck the audience dumb with admiration or aroused it to an indignant protest, according to the literary party allegiance confessed by each person present at the performance. Fifteen years have passed since that time;

in Germany the extreme naturalism for which *Vor Sonnenaufgang* supplied the paradigm has run its course, but as the United States participates so little in the literary movements that sway the European intellect, the contents of *Vor Sonnenaufgang* may still be a novelty to most American readers. I must state at the outset that in sketching out the contents of Hauptmann's first play I shall be obliged to pass over more than one important detail out of deference to the conventional laws of decorum.

Through the discovery of a rich coal seam in his land Farmer Krause becomes unexpectedly a very rich man. He forthwith conceives some mild social ambitions for his family, to gratify which he marries his elder daughter to a civil engineer and sends the younger to a Moravian boarding school. Not being ambitious on his own account, he proceeds to indulge his one congenital passion,—a ceaseless craving for alcohol. His normal condition is that which with characteristic injustice toward the dumb animals we call a state of beastly drunkenness. Let the quotation-worn slander for once be repudiated. Even Mr. Thompson-Seton, who surely knows stranger things about the wild animals than

philosophy and natural history e'er dreamt of, would agree that no animal lower than man revels in such degradation as Farmer Krause. The precious home circle over which this hopeless sot presides includes his infamous rake of a son-in-law, Hofmann. A choice quartet is completed by Krause's hopelessly depraved wife and her cicisbeo, a lecherous hostler. Into this delightful company the younger daughter, Helene, a girl of education and fine feelings, is thrown on her return from school. She could hardly be expected to feel at home in it. The clammy, reeking filth of her surroundings, pressing forward and onward round her, must needs darken her pure girlhood. Her heart loudly counsels her to fly from the importunities of her amorous brother-in-law as well as from other evils—but whither? She loves Alfred Loth, a socialist so stanch that he has spent two years in jail for the sake of his convictions. Is this for Helene the call of fate? Almost it would seem so, as Loth returns her love. But it avails naught, for Loth under his hygienic flannel shirt is the possessor of a coarse-grained socialist conscience and peremptory principles. Like most men of his political faith, he has read an alarming deal.

Accordingly he has, among other things, very decided views on marriage; to put it shortly, to him no daughters of tainted parents need apply. Without losing much time over the customary conflict bred of such a predicament, Loth gives up Helene. The socialist dogma is safe! And in order, probably, to save herself from an unspeakable assault by her own ribald father, Helene stabs herself to death — Before Sunrise.

There are not many books in the literature of the world which spread about them an atmosphere so reeking with vice and horror as this socialistic drama. Tolstoi's *The Power of Darkness* and Zola's *L'Assommoir* and *La Terre* are its nearest of kin. But even these, in spite of their dread aspect, do not present such a spectacle of condensed hideousness. A confirmed drunkard committing suicide—at the age of three! a father who lusts after his own daughter! (When we encounter such things, do we not feel like apologizing to Dr. Alfred Loth for our sentimental disapproval of his course towards Helene?) the distressing cries of a woman in labor issuing from an adjacent room!—for the full-fledged “naturalist” physiological details like these have no horrors: it is otherwise with the

spectator. When after coming home from the revolting entertainment he has thoroughly disinfected himself by a hot tubbing, a man will naturally ask, Does such a degenerate assortment of the species man have any place on the foreground of the stage? Granted that the play is "true"; for it will not do to affirm, as has been done by the unsophisticated, that such scum of society does not really exist, because forsooth Rosegger and Anzengruber, Auerbach and Fritz Reuter have portrayed peasant life in such different colors; or that such pest-holes as Farmer Krause's home are never found in rural parts, and that *Vor Sonnenaufgang* is the product of a pure culture of rustic vice raised by Hauptmann in the coziness of his Berlin work-room. Still we may in fairness inquire of the naturalist, Why this surfeit of ugliness when life is not ugly *a potiori*? Or are we to believe that the Krauses and their tribe form not an exception but the rule? In such a case what were there left for us city dwellers to do but wage a holy war against all country folk? The language of the drama is as disgusting as the incidents; in no other play has Hauptmann sinned so unpardonably against common decorum, for

he soon realized that the naturalistic method can be applied to a higher order of social processes.

The foregoing must not for a moment be taken as an unduly biased judgment. Nothing could be more alien to the spirit of this book than factious or dogmatic opposition to "modernism." Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, however, was felt to be an overdose which the moderns themselves could not altogether stomach. One of their chieftains, Conrad Alberti, burlesqued this sordid tragedy of gin and lust. His skit bears the alluring title *Im Suff* ("In Booze"), and the charming motto *Die Liebe und der Suff, das reibt den Menschen uff* ("Twixt love and booze, one goes to the deuce"). Hauptmann's pedantically circumstantial stage directions are capitally taken off. "Dr. Krawutschke" is thus presented to the reader: "He wears striped trousers, a checked jacket, and soiled linen. The left shoe is down at the heel, but not noticeably so. He speaks very rapidly in abrupt sentences, with a decided touch of the Saxon dialect (he was born in Scheffel Street, Dresden)." At the close Alberti makes the ghost of Lessing appear and say, "Is this a theater or a

pigsty?" This product, coming from one of the apostles of the new art-creed, deserves attention if only for the sake of the epigram with which it dismisses the reader: "To befoul Art is not to free it" (*Die Kunst beschmutzen heißt nicht sie befrei'n*).

Such, then, was Hauptmann's first play. His next, *Das Friedensfest* ("The Feast of Peace") (1890)—the title is an abortive attempt at grim irony—deals not with the degeneration of a whole family, as *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, nor with any deep-reaching human depravity, but with the supposedly inevitable fate of a certain group of pathologically predisposed individuals who are thrown together as a family. Held against its predecessor, this play does not present any essentially new features. Again it has to do with a segment from a family history which, so far as it goes, unrolls itself in a series of imperfectly dovetailed scenes, although there is, all doctrinaire assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, not absent a constructive groundwork. Once more the havoc wrought by alcohol forms the foregone refrain of the sad old story. Once more we learn with dismay how loosely, according to a modern view, the bonds of family life

are tied, and how wantonly they are ruptured by straining egoism. Fritz Scholz, M.D., and Minna, by twenty-two years his junior, are partners in an uncongenial marriage. The doctor, a hypochondriac by constitution, takes it much to heart that his wife fails to understand him. We shall have occasion to observe that many of Hauptmann's heroes keep him company in this form of misery. Indeed, this failure to be understood, like the curse of alcohol, is one of the fixed motives in his dramaturgy. In the present instance the two are connected as cause and effect in that Dr. Scholz seeks consolation in winebibbing. Already we are sufficiently conversant with a third leitmotif, that of heredity, to foresee that at least one of the children must have a fondness for liquor. There are three of them: a pinched old maid of a daughter and two sons. Robert, aged twenty-eight, has the physical and moral earmarks of a degenerate; along with a predilection for strong drink he owes to his progenitor a morbid excitability; of his bodily infirmities youthful dissipations are the direct cause, but, naturally, the real blame for these falls also on his ancestry. (At Jena Hauptmann had become deeply interested in Darwinism, and

in his plays he frequently draws the bold inferences characteristic of the layman.) The second son, Wilhelm, aged twenty-six, has by virtue of a powerful constitution escaped the consequences of youthful excesses; but to prove that he also has come in for his share in the patrimony, he shows, besides a vehement temper, promising symptoms of persecution-mania. While still very young both boys had run away from the unbearable tyranny of the father and learned to shift for themselves. Later the family was reunited, when a terrible catastrophe again drove them apart. In his unjustifiable jealousy of a visiting musician old Dr. Scholz wrongfully accused his wife of infidelity; for this he was punished by the hands of his own younger son. He then left his home, the sons following his example separately. This chapter of history now six years old is unrolled with great skill after the Ibsen fashion in the course of the first act. The curtain rises on the Christmas preparations of the Scholz household. The festival of "Peace on Earth" brings a general family reconciliation. The father, who in the meantime has undergone a severe nervous crisis, returns unexpectedly and joins the reunited circle. Wilhelm, in a scene of frightful pathos, receives

his father's forgiveness. His promised wife, Ida Buchner, dispels by her firm love and confidence his intermittent scruples about drawing her into his sullied existence. So things look wholly auspicious to the unscientific observer. Suddenly, and for no visible cause, jarring discords destroy the precarious harmony and the family feud breaks out afresh. The barely reconciled brothers clash again; the father banishes the diabolic Robert from his house, then relapses into his mania and disappears (end of act ii) from the scene. At the conclusion of the third act he dies. The kindly, resolute Frau Buchner has had ample opportunity during her brief visit to repent of her purpose to bring peace into the family so haplessly torn by incessant strife; and we wonder greatly at her consent to the marriage between Wilhelm and Ida. The author apparently feels obliged to account for her readiness, and he does it strangely enough by showing that Frau Buchner is, in the depths of her resigned heart, herself in love with her daughter's betrothed and more solicitous about his future happiness than about her own daughter's. This fruitful motive is not further exploited, nor is that other world-old one of the rival brothers more than

suggested in the evident infatuation of Robert for his brother's fiancée. Towards the end Wilhelm suffers a rather telling attack of persecution-mania, which sets him thinking and again makes him waver in his resolution to marry Ida; but being without Alfred Loth's oversensitive conscience, he will marry all the same and take his chances on Ida's future happiness.

The play thus terminates in one of those large question marks with which the works and the heads of the modern school are so abundantly equipped.

The next play, *Einsame Menschen* ("Lonely Souls") (1891), is better rounded out. Things are this time carried to a final issue in that the hero, Hans Vockerat, perishes after Hauptmann's favorite method — by suicide. Nevertheless, it is a question whether the definite problem of modern life which is here tackled in good earnest is fairly worked out. How, indeed, is such a thing possible without the use of psychologic resources? And we know that these are eschewed by the rigid naturalist!

What, then, is the theme of *Einsame Menschen*? The inner dissonance of a man torn betwixt religion and science, between the duties of son

and husband and the calling of the inner voice, a struggle forsooth from which an unstable nature like that of Johannes Vockerat may well seek escape in death. Yet Hauptmann, by adding still another pang to his hero's sufferings, has weakened the probability of the tragic end. For be it remembered that, dramatically speaking, only that ending seems probable which we accept as necessary. And there is no compelling reason for Johannes' drowning himself because the Russian student Anna Mahr, for whom he has conceived a crotchety sort of love, prepares to go out of his life. The fact is, Johannes dies because from the very beginning he is under irrevocable sentence of death pronounced by the author, a decree which furnishes the greatest weakness in *Einsame Menschen*. In all other technical respects the play marks a considerable progress. In the first place, the details of the new technic are now handled with much greater freedom; consequently they do not have to monopolize the author's attention. He is at liberty to bestow greater care on the larger features; and it must be said that *Einsame Menschen* is one of the best-composed plays of the modern stage. The events shape themselves with a very fair show of natural, intelligent sequence.

Much critical capital has been made out of the resemblance of Hauptmann's piece to Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. Undeniably Hauptmann has studied to good effect the style and method of the great Norwegian, and there is analogy in the situations too. To me the German play appeals as the truer of the two so far as the humanity of the characters goes. Psychologically these characters are certainly better founded than those in Hauptmann's own earlier plays, a circumstance which may safely be attributed to the author's better acquaintance with the social class to which they belong. When dealing with such people he descends, almost unintentionally, below the crust of appearances to the springs of action. Unfortunately the central situation is, as has been hinted, too calculated, too preëstablished, to be much affected by the better mind-reading powers of the author.

The simple action of *Einsame Menschen* revolves round one of those persons for whom Goethe discovered the appellation *Problematische Naturen* (problematic characters). Johannes Vockerat is studying to be a theologian, when through Darwin and Haeckel the drift of the modern scientific era is forcibly borne upon him. He forsakes

theology and becomes a philosopher of the psycho-physiological school, though the old orthodox Adam is not quite dead within him. For years he has now been fretting over his prospective *magnum opus*. But it is safe to say he would never have achieved the work, even if Hauptmann's five-act tragedy had not effectually cut him off from the possibility, for he is a man with a broken will. We meet his brothers and cousins everywhere in Hauptmann's dramatic world. The family type is classically expressed in Master Heinrich of "The Sunken Bell" celebrity. Johannes loves his wife for a while and after a fashion; but when by chance he meets Anna Mahr he finds that she is more congenial to him. She understands him, and, mark well, he has never been understood before. So he falls in love with her, after a fashion, and now we behold him swinging to and fro between two poles of amatory attraction, just as he has all the time been the shuttlecock between the battledores of two opposite philosophies. His curse is indecision; his only stability is in his self-love, for Johannes Vockerat loves himself at all times and after every fashion. He talks a great deal about himself, a great deal about his work. Somehow he expects all the world to pave and

smooth the way for it, and as its prospective author deems himself excused from all the practical obligations that fall to the head of a well-ordered family. When his poor, loving Käte meekly questions him regarding a vital business matter, he coarsely insults her for breaking in upon his valuable trend of thought. Explicitly he declares that he will regulate his conduct according to this formula: "My work comes first. That comes first and second and third; the 'practical' does not come until after that, if you please." A man with such a disposition is foredoomed either to a life of solitude or to a life of failure. There is enough misfortune in Johannes Vockerat's temperament without the supervention of a forbidden love. The troublous aspect of such Wertherian characters as Johannes was for a long time of absorbing interest to Hauptmann. He dedicated *Einsame Menschen* to those who "had lived through" the tragedy. And yet such conflicts as are here portrayed were then (1891) seemingly foreign to his personal experience. But this need not matter, perhaps, in any literary form save the lyric. *Einsame Menschen* bodies forth the experiences of another man, "observed," it is true, with a wonderful keenness, yet unfortunately

not—in true poet fashion—relieved by the dramatist. And so one could not help wishing that this highly gifted man might for once undertake a task the execution of which would vitally involve the coöperation of his own acquired experiences, or at least of deep-rooted, settled sympathies.

This opportunity offered itself in the naturalistic tragedy *Die Weber* ("The Weavers"), published in 1892, first performed in 1893, originally composed in dialect (*De Waber*), afterwards translated by the author into "literary" German with a still more than sufficient Silesian flavoring. This performance of Hauptmann's is replete with warmest personal feeling and wholly free from mere sentimental zeal, for he himself as the descendant of poor labor-driven linen weavers holds their grievance that cries to heaven as part and parcel of his heritage. From this personal participation in the wrongs perpetrated against the weavers the play derives a strong emotional swing, rising at times to the full height of rhetorical pathos, as in the impassioned tirade of Luise Hilse against the manufacturers. It was simply impossible for a subject that yielded so wide a space for personal feeling to be treated without a betrayal

of the author's social creed. "The Weavers" is the tragedy of hunger driven at last to desperation. In Hauptmann's view the responsibility for the wretchedness of his proletarians rests evenly with the manufacturers because they carry on a ruthless scheme of spoliation, and with the state because it stands by and allows the merciless exploitation of the laborer. The workmen who now flock to the performances of *Die Weber* and wildly applaud its sentiment are very apt to forget that such a simple socialistic analysis of the case will hardly apply to conditions of to-day. That in some parts of the world there still exist such slave drivers as Herr Dreissiger (at first, after the original, he was called Zwanziger) is unfortunately not to be denied; but to regard such a man as the pattern of the propertied class would betray a perilous hastiness of judgment. At any rate, it is certainly unfortunate for the play that it owes its actual interest so largely to the fact that in it the antagonism which in a sufficiently acute form exists at all times between labor and capital here usurps the place of a concrete dramatic hero. In respect to dramatic movement this play is inferior to its predecessors. Each act brings a startlingly vivid scene of life, and yet the whole

is unsatisfying to the dramatic sense. In the first act we are shown the cruelly realistic picture of an industrious, good-natured, withal stolidly patient people, brought low by grinding toil, and unable to live on its pitiful wage. Unfortunately Hauptmann has not exaggerated. The history of the "famine districts" of Silesia is even more grewsome than his dramatic tale. For nearly three centuries the weavers were fighting against starvation, and only once, in the summer of 1844,<sup>1</sup> they rose in frenzy against their masters. The rebellion was promptly suppressed before much damage had been done to anybody except the weavers.

About the middle of the past century the life that these poor folk of the Silesian "Eulengebirge" region led in fairly good times was unworthy of human beings. Their situation in hard times beggars description. Mother Baumert, whom a longish stage direction describes as accurately

<sup>1</sup> Gerhart Hauptmann became familiar with the details of that uprising through a special history written by Alfred Zimmermann, a political economist, who published in 1885 an exhaustive study of the conditions of the Silesian linen industry. But he had been touched much earlier by the sadness of their lot through stories current in his immediate family, and he declares in dedicating *Die Weber* to his father that the latter's story of his own father, who had passed his earlier life at the loom, was the real germ of his tragedy.

as though a warrant were out for her apprehension, gives a fair idea of their physical condition: "A face wasted to the bone, with folds and wrinkles in the bloodless skin; sunken eyes, watery and inflamed from the dust of the wool, smoke, and overwork by candlelight; a long, scrawny neck with a goiter; a hollow chest swathed in rags and tatters." In the second and third acts the spark of rebellion is carried among the down-trodden weavers from without. A son of the village, having served his military term in the city, returns, bringing with him the spirit of vengeance, and fires the weavers with enthusiasm for the "propaganda of action"; the bad gin from the tavern infuses additional courage, and they determine to settle accounts with their oppressors. In the fourth act the agitator is arrested and shackled, but on his way to prison he is rescued by the rioters from the grasp of the law, and the revolt breaks out in full force. Dreissiger's house is attacked and ravaged. The life of the usually so peaceful district is thrown into the wildest disorder. And so, at the end of the fourth act, the patent purpose of the tragedy is accomplished. There is no good reason why the author should not give the word right here for the royal musketry

to rattle the death tattoo for the poor insurgents, since dramaturgically considered there can be no other way out of the chaos. There is, however, yet a fifth act, which practically constitutes a separate play; for the affecting death of God-fearing old Hilse, who to the end refuses to take part in the riot, is not tragic in the sense of dramatic art, rather it seems a satire on the injustice of fate that the poor fellow is killed by a stray bullet at his loom just when he has so stoutly declared: "Here my heavenly Father has placed me. . . . Here we are going to sit and do what's our duty," etc. Any one whose critical sense is not entirely blunted by the woeful distress which, as a unique motive with variations, dominates the action from beginning to end, feels, as the curtain finally hides the undying misery from his view, that this play more than any other work of Hauptmann's pen shows that its author follows the drama without a genuine dramatic vocation. Such as it is, without a hero to whom as to the natural center the interest might chiefly gravitate, without a more than inferential solidarity of its parts, with its final violent severance of the threads and filaments of the plot, "The Weavers" has aside from its vivacious realism chiefly a

humanitarian value; it is, drawn out into five long acts, the blood-curdling outcry of an outraged class of society, who, lacking the leadership of a superior intelligence which might help them to strike off their shackles for good, allow themselves to follow shortsighted ringleaders and to vent their just anger in acts of wanton, insensate destruction, forthwith to acknowledge with thanks the drastic lesson given them by the ruling powers, and under the accustomed yoke to drag on the old calamitous existence.

Its power to draw forth deep human sympathy is the prime reason why this tragedy, despite its slenderness of incident and its technical shortcomings, has established Hauptmann in public opinion as the foremost tragic writer of Germany. And to be sure, for those who have to resort to the theater for instruction regarding the naked facts of common life, or for those who need to be dosed with a literary quintuple extract of human misery because their dyspeptic consciences fail to react under the stimulus of natural aliment, — for such “The Weavers” might pass for the very acme of creative power. And as for those who in their own lives have gone through the misery which “The Weavers” demonstrates *ad oculos*,

the impression made by the tragedy upon them is so self-explanatory that we need not find fault with the censor because, paternally solicitous for the common weal, he failed to fling wide the gates of the playhouses for "The Weavers."<sup>1</sup> He may have remembered, in these days of labor troubles, that in the good old time the estimable and worshipful aldermen of Leipzig canceled the permit for the presentation of Schiller's "The Robbers" during the annual Fair held in that ancient and honorable town on the ground that there would be enough stealing done at this time anyway. In forming an unbiased estimate of Hauptmann's play, we should not be deceived by its eloquent plea for the submerged portion of humanity into ascribing the deep impression infallibly produced by "The Weavers" to any artistic superexcellence. Hauptmann, to modify a charge once made by Nietzsche against Richard Wagner, entices us into the theater with the promise of a dramatic entertainment, and once he has us securely pinned down into our seats, proceeds so to crush us with the force of a severe

<sup>1</sup> The performance is now licensed in Germany. (See p. 150.) Yet in this country, if I mistake not, the anarchist John Most was enjoined from playing the piece.

lecture that we forget everything except the eloquently presented rights and wrongs of the case.

Structurally "The Weavers" is below the standard of the earlier dramas. As for the diction, Hauptmann still keeps under strict restraint that glorious power of expression by which in his later works he won universal admiration. In his endeavor to make the people talk just as they would in real life, he resists unyieldingly each and every suggestion of stylistic improvement offered by his better artistic sense. Undeniably he is a master of the mean language of the people. Yet the confusing jargon and the copious billingsgate fall strangely from such refined lips. Even now occasionally, in minor ways, we see the irrepressible lyrist gain the upper hand, so that we are not wholly unprepared to find the poet giving full rein to his lyric genius in later works.

The play, even in its "German" translation, loses much through the broad Silesian twang; the relentless accuracy of the naturalist partially defeats its own end when we can only with difficulty make out the speeches of his characters. *Die Weber* has to do with a very much lower stratum of society than either *Das Friedensfest* or *Einsame Menschen*, both of which plays were

wholly free from grossness and smut. We are therefore prepared for rather strong things to happen in the speech and doings of these Pariahs of German society; and the author does not disappoint the expectation. To his honor be it said that Hauptmann is one of the most clean minded of men, and that he has never, not even in "Before Sunrise," been a cultivator of the revolting and obscene from sinister motives. While he is undoubtedly very open to the prepotent currents in the literary taste of his countrymen, owing to his exquisitely susceptible nature, he is, so far as his intentions go, swayed by no mercenary design upon the flippancy and sensational proclivities of the theater-goers. On the other hand, he does not recoil before any ugliness so long as he believes it to be helpful in the dramatic revelation of truth. It seems to me, however, that in "The Weavers," as in "Before Sunrise," he oversteps the limits of the permissible. In the second act we are forced to witness the preparations for the Baumert family's festive dinner. For two years these poor people have had no taste of meat. The roast that is now sizzling on their pan represents the mortal remains of the pet dog. Of this we are informed through our eyes, ears,

and noses, nay we are not even spared full knowledge of the disgusting consequences which the unwonted reception of animal diet has for Father Baumert's enfeebled stomach. I do not think that reportorial conscientiousness need go to such length. Reportorial conscientiousness is said advisedly, for unfortunately Hauptmann cannot be accused of exaggeration.<sup>1</sup>

The two short stories, or "novelistic studies," as they are called by the author, *Bahnwärter Thiel* ("Flagman Thiel"), written in 1887, and *Der Apostel* ("The Apostle"), written in 1890, may be conveniently mentioned in this place, as they were published together in book form very shortly after "The Weavers" (1892).

"Flagman Thiel" is unquestionably influenced by Zola, and inspired by Hauptmann's sympathy for the spiritual life of the lowly, which is so pronounced in the dramas from "The Weavers" on to his last production, the infanticide tragedy *Rose Bernd*. It is the tragic story of a poor railroad hand who marries a second time for the sake of his idolized boy. The stepmother, a coarse, violent, brutal wench, maltreats the little fellow atrociously. Thiel, who returns only at

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 151 f.

fixed times from his post in the woods, and who, besides, is under the power of his new wife, is long ignorant of the true state of things. When he discovers it he loses all balance. His spiritual disintegration from that moment on to his total collapse over the accidental death of little Tobias and the maniacal killing of the wife and baby is the chief object of the "study." Not only is this object so well attained as by itself to cause a lively regret that the author has not essayed the epic form more frequently; Hauptmann also reveals, as indeed was to be confidently expected in view of his plays, a rare descriptive gift. The wonderful description of the nocturnal loneliness of a landscape gradually set aquiver and afire by the approach of the train is a marvel of loving observation. It is not the conventional onomatopœic rhapsody of the puffing and panting engine, the clash and clatter of the wheels and rails; nor the picture of the soulless monster painted so often, perhaps best by Emile Zola in *Bête humaine*,—or of the vitalized machine which from literary over-use has a touch of the stereotypic, even in Kipling's capital ".007." Hauptmann's nature-sense seizes upon the finest nuances of light and sound. The music of the whirring

telegraph wires, the rhythmic welcome sung by the steel tracks and gradually changing into deafening turmoil is caught to perfection. Still more entrancing is the truly realistic and none the less highly poetic depiction of the light-effects. It is a pity that so drastic a power of description must seek its usual outlet in the minion and non-pareil of stage directions.

*Der Apostel* gives still wider space to the genius of Hauptmann. Written about the time when the first three plays were completed, it sounds almost like the signal of deliverance from naturalism. Hauptmann tries in this study to fathom a finely susceptible but mystically attuned soul gliding by degrees from an exalted religious mood into religious paranoia. Here again he is not without a literary model. The sketch of the poet Lenz by George Büchner serves him as such. And a living model, too, was in his mind: the religious eccentric, Johannes Gutzeit. The fragment shows the "Apostle," who was formerly an army officer, in the early morning hour, passing white robed through the streets of Zürich out into the country. In the presence of nature he experiences strange hallucinations and mysterious raptures. The fragment breaking off

rather abruptly leaves the Apostle in the ecstatic belief that he is the Christ. This transition from a mere overwrought mental state to one of pronounced monomania is developed with consummate skill. Yet on the whole *Bahnwärter Thiel* deserves the prize over *Der Apostel*, since the latter is in fact only a "study," while the former presents itself as a finished "short story."

The next drama shows Hauptmann still firmly clinging to naturalism and striking up again his favorite tune, the old yet ever new song of King Alcohol. The central figure in *Kollege Crampton* ("Colleague Crampton") (1892) is a talented painter, who has fallen into evil and idle ways, and to whom the whisky bottle has to make amends for all blighted hopes and stunted or shattered ideals. In briefest terms his misfortunes may be diagnosed as congenital instability aggravated by domestic woes. At any rate, from the beginning to the end of the play he is a tipsy buffoon and a bankrupt financially, morally, and artistically. The action of the comedy begins on the morning when the reigning duke inspects the art academy where Colleague Crampton (one cannot help wondering why) is still tolerated as a teacher. Crampton, to whom the duke has

formerly been very kind, sets extravagant hopes on this visit. The news that His Highness has left the school without so much as inquiring for him puts the good-natured idler utterly beside himself. Now blow upon blow follows in rapid succession. His wealthy wife leaves him, his goods are attached, he is asked to resign his professorship. He must leave his snug studio, the scene of his protracted inactivity; with full sail he sets his course towards his inevitable destination — the gutter. It must be added that Crampton divides his valuable affections between the aforementioned whisky bottle and his own lovely daughter, Gertrude. At the present juncture the whisky bottle accompanies him to cheer his exile, whereas the lovely daughter, who loyally sides with him against her mother, remains behind. She is befriended by Max Strähler (Strähler was the maiden name of Hauptmann's mother), a favorite pupil of Professor Crampton, who has been expelled from the academy because of foolish pranks (an experience which befell young Gerhart Hauptmann himself while an art student at Breslau), but who, out of gratitude to his former teacher, finds for the daughter a home among his relatives.

Up to this point we have before us the not unskillful exposition of a piece which so far secedes from the accepted code of dramaturgy as to resist classification; judging by this part of the play (acts i and ii) alone, one cannot say for the life of him whether the plot makes for a comedy or a tragedy. From here on things jog along helter-skelter in the naturalistic groove, a course of affairs which does not prevent the remaining acts from bristling with improbabilities. For instance, one whole act is taken up with Max's fruitless search for the whereabouts of the jolly old reprobate. We are expected to believe that in a German town of medium size a well-known inhabitant can disappear as quickly and effectually as the proverbial needle in the haystack. Adolf Strähler, Max's older brother, is too sensible to believe as the audience must, and discovers the hiding place of the missing artist without any trouble. In the third act Crampton pops up in a wretched pothouse, hopelessly befuddled, having during all that time assiduously soaked his ever thirsty soul. Here at the head of a delegation of merry-making philistines a master house painter makes Crampton, in good faith and with due modesty, the generous offer

of permanent and fairly well paying work. Well, why not? Many a better man in Crampton's situation has found himself face to face with a similar proposition, and oftentimes the offer has not been scorned. Yet the author of "Colleague Crampton" would have us believe that the painter's harmless though clumsy suggestion is rank arrogance and hollow mockery, and that it conveys an insult so awful that even a Crampton is almost sobered by it. In what—we might then appeal from Crampton drunk to Crampton sober—does the honest fellow's crime consist? Is his trade in itself dishonoring? Or does he intend through this offer to lower Crampton's genius in the eyes of the world? Or are we to regard the scene as symbolic of the sad yoking of the artist's genius by an unfeeling, commercialized age? Certainly this would be reading into the play more of tendency than were good for its realism! And, by the way, how do we know that Crampton is a real genius? Must we appraise him at his own estimate?

The above incident marks the tip of the ascending action. Immediately afterward Max appears, pays the debts of his future father-in-law,—for this relationship he has diligently prepared the

way, — and, having secretly bought up the auctioned possessions of the professor, piece by piece, leads him in the last act back to the new studio, furnished precisely like the old one. And what is the first thing Crampton does? He pulls himself together after the agreeable shock, yields to the prompting of his heart, and ferrets out with feverish haste his beloved gin bottle from its familiar hiding place — if the actor whom I saw in the part interpreted him aright.<sup>1</sup> Naïve people have wondered why just at the end Crampton should cap his fatherly blessing with an anticlimax by calling young Strähler a blockhead. Probably in his good nature he pities the luckless husband who is saddling himself with such a precious specimen of a father-in-law. The drama "Colleague Crampton" suffers from an incurable weakness, the absolute lack of character in its hero. And like its predecessors it is again without a definitive conclusion so far as it deals with Crampton's fate, because no rational person will be optimistic enough to believe in the permanent reform of the old backslider.

<sup>1</sup> This "business," however, is not indicated in the text of the play.

The next of Hauptmann's works in order of publication is *Der Biberpelz* ("The Beaver Coat") (1893), a naturalistic comedy of provincial life. Inasmuch, however, as it is linked together with *Der rote Hahn* (1901) by a sort of personal union, through the identity of the principal characters, we shall postpone its consideration for the present and turn our attention to another play.

With *Hannele* (1893) Hauptmann planted his feet on a different ground from that which he had hitherto stood on. Had he not reverted to naturalism after "The Sunken Bell," we might regard *Hannele* as the bridge that spans the gulf between his two widely separated phases of artistic creation. That even so this imaginative play betokens an experimental departure from absolute realism is seen at first glance in the outward form, in the shifting from prose to verse, and back again. Who would have expected a concession like that from the associate of Holz and Schlaf, from a dramatist who hitherto had felt obliged utterly to scorn rime, monologue, and many other recognized technical contrivances! And yet one ought to be prepared for abrupt changes in a poet whose fundamental mood results from the commixture of radical

and reactionary tendencies, and has much in common with the cloudy world-conception of the Romantics of old, — a poet, moreover, by no means free from vanity, who seems to be incessantly aiming to surprise the world and chain criticism to his triumphal car. Hauptmann willingly lets himself be swept along with the tide of popular sentiment, but feeling himself, justly, a Triton among the minnows, he loves to swim in the lead.

I have already stated that in the realm of the fairy tale lies the sole territory of which Hauptmann is lord. Unquestionably, the poet himself never realized this limitation. And it may even be that he would never have exercised his genius in that field had not the *Märchendrama* just then enjoyed growing favor as a dramatic specialty; witness the phenomenal success of Fulda's Orientally costumed *Der Talisman* (1893), the homely opera *Hänsel und Gretel* (text by Adelheid Wette, music by E. Humperdinck), and other similar works of legend origin. It is not accidental that the commingling of naturalism and fantastic idealism is brought about in *Hannele* through the poetic device of a dream. That form of all others lends itself most readily to the bold

experiment, for the dramatic reproduction of a dream does not presuppose strict causality and sequence. As every dream is woven of reality and imagination, it thus affords a sort of neutral territory for two forces which are apparently antagonistic in the contemporary practice of art. In the *Märchendrama* of earlier periods, notably in the efforts of its great masters Raimund and Grillparzer, the dream serves to introduce romantic situations which may be resolved at a moment's notice to give place to the actualities of real life. The contrivance is simple enough: at the critical moment the hero is made to return to waking consciousness. But while the trance lasts the poet has a fine opportunity to expose the intimate soul-life of his characters. Usually an allegoric or didactic purpose is conveyed; so in Raimund, Grillparzer, and Fulda.

By the form chosen, the harsh contrasts presented in *Hannele*—its alternation of prose and verse, vulgar dialect and cultivated speech, its constant clash between the squalor of the *milieu* and the glorious forms shaped by the poet's vaulting imagination—are excused or at least extenuated. We view with easy tolerance the

bold adversative of poorhouse and heaven, paupers and angels, of sweet, pious Hannele and the village slattern Hete. The dramatic presuppositions are arbitrary, inconsistent, and impossible. It is intended that the entire action should be tangible and each personality stand out concretely; for this the author depends, as usual, to an unreasonable degree on the make-up of the characters.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the center of interest is translated from the actual to a world of apparitions, and the most powerful imagination of the audience is put into commission to picture Hannele lying fatally ill in bed and at the same time taking part in a *commedia dell' arte* born of her feverish visions.

To account for the astonishing success of *Hannele*, — at first the play bore the title *Hannele's Himmelfahrt* ("The Assumption of Hannele") — it is only necessary to read it in an unprejudiced frame of mind. From every line of it pours forth that rich stream of purest human sympathy, which, flowing from a true

<sup>1</sup> Here is an example: "Enter Magistrate Berger, a *Captain* of the Reserves, as no one can fail to notice." Is such a stage direction anything short of unconscious comicality, in view of the fact that the magistrate is in civilian clothes?

poet-soul, bubbles up irresistibly even through the naturalistic rubbish of the earlier works.

The plot in *Hannele* is almost as lean and somber as in the former efforts of Hauptmann. In his drunken rage a ruffianly stepfather so maltreats his fourteen-year-old daughter that she seeks refuge in death and throws herself into the water. She is pulled out by kindly people and carried to the poorhouse for nursing. Here the village schoolmaster, a deaconess, the country doctor, the magistrate, even several inmates of the poorhouse, take loving care of the unfortunate child. But she is past human help. Her terrible agitation and the fever have between them irreparably shattered her frail little body. Delirium colors things and people with the hues of her childish fantasy. The poet with exquisite touch ushers us into the atmosphere of dream-land. In the dream action the characters are none other than the persons of the sick-room transfigured by the imagination of the little sufferer. Her desperate act, too, is thus glorified, for she is under the delusion that Jesus himself invited her into the water. All that passes is unreal, and yet in the fantastic action how much of Hannele's soul is revealed! We descend to the

depths of her subconscious being, just as by a different process we are led to know the unguarded souls of the mad Ophelia and Gretchen. The poet has succeeded in making Hannele's hallucinations entirely vivid to the reader, notably when he conjures up before her eyes the terrifying appearance of her bestial stepfather. And at the same time his adequate art has penciled with discreetly delicate lines the first dawning love experience of the ripening young girl. To attain such truly poetic results Hauptmann had to rise subjectively above his crude material. Therein lies the significance of *Hannele* for his art-practice. The naturalists have often proclaimed their self-satisfied belief that it is far more difficult to objectify a transverse section of real life from without than to build up its semblance from the inner consciousness. In *Hannele* Hauptmann undertakes to expose to view a transverse section, as it were, of a human soul. He makes a practical attempt at psychology. Certainly this is an infinitely difficult and delicate task, and one which in the present instance could be accomplished only with the assistance of old and well-tried dramatic expedients. But he has not discarded the modern technical

acquisitions, either. *Hannele*, in fact, represents the application of modern technic to an all but obsolete variety of the drama. Or is it other than melodramatic when we see shadowy forms flit, to the strains of soft music, across the simple soul of the little martyr who languishes in rags on her bed of straw, while fever dreams delude her with the fabulous splendor of her celestial reward?

*Hannele* is a melodrama, even in the current meaning of the word, i.e. an *Ausstattungsstück*. We see with wonder the stout disciple of Bjarne Holmsen throwing himself into the circles of the spectacular play. The elaborate allegorical apparatus readily calls to mind the second part of *Faust* and Ferdinand Raimund's magic pieces. But more than these plays *Hannele* is instinct with genuine human pathos.

True it is, as has been pointed out, that the component elements of the play are at variance with one another, yet in the effect produced by *Hannele* as a whole the outer visible misery is only subservient to the touching portrayal of Hannele's martyrdom and deliverance. The naturalistic part of *Hannele* is decidedly secondary in importance to the idealistic.

The technical treatment of the desolate environment against which the idealized figure of Hannele stands out in shining relief is fully in accord with the method employed in "Before Sunrise" and "The Weavers." In the higher sphere Hauptmann's genius bursts the somber chrysalis and, spreading its brilliant wings, soars high above the arid sobriety of the actual. Who would have suspected so much splendor of rhythm and color in the author of "The Weavers"? Listen to the entrancing "Song of the Stranger":

#### THE SONG OF THE STRANGER<sup>1</sup>

The City of the Blessèd is marvellously fair,  
And peace and utter happiness are never-ending there.  
The houses are of marble, the roofs of gold so fine,  
And down their silver channels bubble brooks of ruby wine.  
The streets that shine so white, so white, are all bestrewn with  
flowers,  
And endless peals of wedding bells ring out from all the towers.  
The pinnacles, as green as May, gleam in the morning light,  
Beset with flickering butterflies, with rose-wreaths decked and  
dight.  
Twelve milk-white swans fly round them in mazy circles wide,  
And preen themselves, and ruffle up their plumage in their pride ;

<sup>1</sup> The translation is from the English version of the play by W. Archer (Heinemann, London, 1898).

They soar aloft so bravely through the shining heavenly air,  
With fragrance all a-quiver and with golden trumpet-blare ;  
In circle-sweeps majesticl forever they are winging,  
And the pulsing of their pinions is like harp-strings softly ringing.  
They look abroad o'er Sion, on garden and on sea,  
And green and filmy streamers behind them flutter free —  
And underneath them wander, throughout the heavenly land,  
The people in their feast-array, forever hand in hand ;  
And then into the wide, wide sea, filled with the red, red wine,  
Behold ! they plunge their bodies with glory all a-shine —  
They plunge their shining bodies into the gleaming sea,  
Till in the deep clear purple they 're swallowed utterly ;  
And when again they leap aloft rejoicing from the flood,  
Their sins have all been washed away in Jesus' blessed blood.

In *Hannele* we have seen that Hauptmann takes himself out of the file of the intransigent naturalists. It was Karl Gutzkow who once said, "Every true poet becomes a symbolist, but for the poet of masculine temperament history provides the guise." That is to say, for the aspirations of such a poet the historical drama supplies the fittest vehicle of expression. Now it has been stated of Hauptmann, without any disparagement of his high poetic virtues, that he is not properly a poet of the masculine type. For this reason his experiment in historical drama miscarried.

The historical drama, more than any other form of literary production, demands on the part of its author the exercise of hard, uncompromising logic and a keen historical sense; both are beyond Hauptmann's capacity. Karl Bleibtreu hits the point exactly when he finds in Hauptmann's *Ilorlan Geyer* only the outer garb of an epoch, not its flesh and sinew.

With the first representation on the stage of his one historical play (January 4, 1896) our poet experienced his first and only complete failure.<sup>1</sup> From the effects of this blow it is said he has never been able to recover. I believe that Hauptmann's severance from extreme naturalism was indirectly responsible for this fiasco. While still under the spell of that doctrine the poet had undertaken with might and main the great experiment foreshadowed in "The Weavers" of applying the so-called scientific method to a strictly historical subject. He may have anticipated for his work the same explosive effect that was produced in the eighteenth century by Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*. During the execution of

<sup>1</sup> Very recently the play, in an abridged and somewhat altered form, has been staged again; at the present writing it is being given with fair success in Berlin.

the project, however, he had begun to recover from naturalism in its acutest form. It is extremely difficult for an artist under the circumstances either to throw away his work or to recast it. The original notions with obsessive force determine its form. So Hauptmann worked on with broken purpose and laboriously completed the work in the same manner in which it was begun; the result satisfied neither the old standard nor the new.

The historic Florian Geyer,<sup>1</sup> who resembles in many points the Knight of Berlichingen, was the ablest and most loyal leader of the insurgents. Had it been Sudermann who handled this theme he would undoubtedly have found the tragedy to consist in the fact that Geyer, who though a noble by birth forsakes his hereditary sphere to champion the rights of the seditious peasants and stand sponsor for their most radical demands, is repudiated by both factions and cruelly hounded to death because he holds right and justice higher than party allegiance. This tragedy of the *déclassé* Hauptmann barely indicates. The leader of the "Black Band" falls out with his mercenary fellow rebels and cannot outlive the wreck

<sup>1</sup> See Bensen's *History of the Peasant War in East Franconia in 1525*.

of the ideals he has defended. For the rest Hauptmann is content to paint in broad diorama a succession of impressionistic pictures of the long ago, joined together after a fashion, yet not summing up, somehow, to a full-orbed dramatic action. So far as we are informed through the play alone the end is too much like an unfortunate accident. A true dramatist must be able to persuade us that the end could not possibly have been otherwise.<sup>1</sup> Another fault of this much too long tragedy is that it lacks an orderly arrangement. The chaotic action is disconcerting and disturbs the composure indispensable for æsthetic enjoyment. The historic background is woven in with undeniable skill, but in the end one loses the thread in the maze of details. Finally the diction, for which Hauptmann had so diligently scoured the old chronicles, is a stumbling-block for a modern audience. Without at all impugning its accuracy, how much has been actually gained for the realism of the play when the result of repristination is to make the utterance sound strange and harsh to all but to the German philologist?

<sup>1</sup> The drama should be the place where we may see, more easily recognizable than in actual life, the universal operation and validity of irresistible law. — E. WOODBRIDGE, *The Drama, its Law and its Technique*, p. 44.

In one respect *Florian Geyer* resembles "The Weavers." In Hauptmann's hands Florian is not the real hero, holding the dramatic interest from beginning to end. The principal rôle is played by the singular uprising of one whole social estate against another, or if one looks for something at least more concrete, "Poor Conrad," the rebellious peasantry, is the surrogate hero, just as the starving proletariat was in "The Weavers." But the greater dramatic weakness of the newer play comes to light in the fact that the poet is silent as to the cause of the uprising. The rebel peasants of the rank and file do not appear until the fifth act, so that we are not directly moved to pity by their lot; possibly Hauptmann takes it for granted that we remember all about their woes from our high-school days. The cast, by the way, comprises no fewer than sixty-one persons.

Geyer does not stand out in bold relief against the large and confused living background as does Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar or Coriolanus. The attempt to characterize each of so many figures detracts from his due importance as the central figure. Hauptmann is not enough of a dramatist to have succeeded in an indirect characterization of his hero, such as Schiller gives when he

prepares us so happily for the domineering figure of Wallenstein by picturing the spirit that rules in his camp, explaining thus, even before the commander appears, his transgression and downfall through his forceful, dangerous influence over the masses.

These various failings effectually blocked for *Florian Geyer* the way to public favor at a time when amid the exultant joy that greeted Wildenbruch's trilogy *Heinrich und Heinrichs Geschlecht* ("King Henry and his House") (1896) it seemed as if ultra-naturalism were now to be marched out of the theater to the familiar beat of Schiller's iambic pathos.

Hauptmann misconstrued the symptomatic significance of this defeat, which was a censure less for the man than for the school by which, after all, he stood with but partial allegiance. His sicklied imagination exaggerated the meaning of his failure, as though he had staked all his power on a great undertaking and had found to his utter dismay that his strength was inadequate.

Out of his ungrounded despondency sprang the germ of a new poem calculated to allay his self-distrust: an allegoric work which, far outstripping anything he had previously performed, insured

for many years, perhaps forever, an honorable place for his name among those who by satisfying the best judges of their own time deserve to live for all ages.

Denn wer den Besten seiner Zeit genug  
Getan, der hat gelebt für alle Zeiten.

"The Sunken Bell" is just as little a drama as *Hannele*, perhaps even less so, but nevertheless it is an art work of singular beauty, couched in language of a poetic splendor unparalleled in modern letters and fraught with a pure and truly German inwardness. The real worth of this poem does not lie in its far-sought symbolism, but in the wondrous atmosphere suffusing the whole and transporting us by its magic into the heart of the old romantic land of Tieck, Eichendorff, and Fouqué, where the brooks babble and the trees whisper and the winds make music to it all. In this fantastic world Gerhart Hauptmann fairly revels, combining in his all-perceptive sense for the beauties and mysteries of nature the eye of a Böcklin with the ear of a Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Never yet has a poet stood in a more intimate sensuous relation to nature; at least no poet has been more successful in vivifying her.

Out of the well among the soughing pines, spluttering and blinking, the Nickelmann (water sprite) pulls himself up, annoyed at first by the unaccustomed glare of the spring sunshine. From the thicket the wood sprite capers into the clearing, a comical, carnal-minded fellow, goat footed, horned, and whiskered, pipe in mouth, a swarm of flies buzzing round him. He has broken away for a while from the humdrummery of domestic life, for a change from the boresome Missus and her nine dirty little brats, and now drinks in contentedly the joy of May-time. The smell of spring-tide is in the air, as Rautendelein reminds the Nickelmann:

Ay, ay —

It smells of springtide. Well, is that so strange?

Why, every lizard, mole, and worm, and mouse —

The veriest water-rat — had scented that.

The quail, the hare, the trout, the fly, the weeds,

Had told thee spring was here —

What a fascinating familiarity with the nocturnal gambols of the elfin folk is felt in the charming roundelay! <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The passages from "The Sunken Bell" are quoted from the excellent translation of the play by Charles Henry Meltzer (Doubleday & McClure Company, New York, 1901).

*First Elf* (whispering)

Sister !

*Second Elf* (as above)

Sister !

*First Elf* (as above)

White and chill

Shines the moon across the hill.

Over bank and over brae,

Queen she is and queen shall stay.

*Second Elf*

Whence com'st thou ?

*First Elf*

From where the light

In the waterfall gleams bright,

Where the glowing flood doth leap

Roaring down into the deep.

Then, from out the mirk and mist,

Where the foaming torrent hissed,

Past the dripping rocks and spray,

Up I swiftly made my way.

*Third Elf* (joining them)

Sisters, is it here ye dance ?

*First Elf*

Wouldst thou join us ? Quick — advance !

*Second Elf*

And whence com'st thou ?

*Third Elf*

Hark and hist !

Dance and dance, as ye may list !

'Mid the rocky peaks forlorn  
Lies the lake where I was born.  
Starry gems are mirrored clear  
On the face of that dark mere.  
Ere the fickle moon could wane,  
Up I swept my silver train.  
Where the mountain breezes sigh,  
Over clove and crag came I.

*Fourth Elf* (entering)

Sisters !

*First Elf*

Sister ! Join the round !

*All* (together)

Ring-a-ring-a-ring-around !

*Fourth Elf*

From Dame Holle's flowery brae,  
Secretly I stole away.

*First Elf*

Wind and wander, in and out.

*All* (together)

Ring-a-ring-a-round-about !

(Lightning and distant thunder.)

(Enter suddenly, from the hut, Rautendelein. Clasp- ing her hands behind her head, she watches the dance from the doorway. The moonlight falls full on her.)

*Rautendelein*

Ho, my fairies !

*First Elf*

Hark ! A cry !

*Second Elf*

Owch ! My dress is all awry !

*Rautendelein*

Ho, ye fairies !

*Third Elf*

Oh, my gown !

Flit and flutter, up and down.

*Rautendelein* (joining in the dance)

Let me join the merry round,  
 Ring-a-ring-a-ring-around !  
 Silver nixie, sweetest maid,  
 See how richly I 'm arrayed.  
 All of silver, white and rare,  
 Granny wove my dress so fair.  
 Thou, my fairy, brown, I vow  
 Browner far am I than thou.  
 And, my golden sister fair,  
 I can match thee with my hair.  
 Now I toss it high — behold,  
 Thou hast surely no such gold.  
 Now it tumbles o'er my face :  
 Who can rival me in grace ?

*All* (together)

Wind and wander, in and out,  
 Ring-a-ring-a-round-about !

Hauptmann's genius has power to gift with life from the welling spring of his own rich artist soul all the elemental forces of nature. In "The

Sunken Bell " whatever moves, lives. Hear the spell spoken by Rautendelein as she bustles about the hearth over her work as sick-nurse :

Flickering spark in the ash of death,

Glow with life of living breath !

Red, red wind, thy loudest blow !

I, as thou, did lawless grow !

Simmer, sing, and simmer !

*(The flame leaps up on the hearth.)*

Kettle swaying left and right—

Copper-lid, thou 'rt none too light !

Bubble, bubble, broth and brew,

Turning all things old to new !

Simmer, sing, and simmer !

Green and tender herbs of spring

In the healing draught I fling.

Drink it sweet, and drink it hot—

Life and youth are in the pot !

Simmer, sing, and simmer !

Just as long as Hauptmann symbolically vivifies nature his poetry pours forth with a spontaneous and irresistible charm. " The Sunken Bell " is instinct with an all-embracing nature-sense; nearly the whole gamut of nature's varying moods is run, from the awful to the idyllic. But as soon as he oversteps his limitations and tries through

the symbol to give concrete shape to the unsubstantial, the forces that rule within or above insentient nature, he finds them inconvertible and quickly loses himself in subtilties. To submit just one example, it is decidedly farfetched when at the beginning of the fourth act the six talents involved in the creation of a poetical work, to wit: Intellect, Energy, Inspiration, Indecision, Self-Criticism, and Self-Discipline, are personified as six dwarfs forced into servitude by the bell founder Heinrich. By a Goethe growing old and whimsical we meekly allow ourselves to be mystified; but even from such a Goethe to Hauptmann it is a far cry.

“The *Sunken Bell*” has appeared in an almost unprecedented number of editions in the original text, and it has been turned several times into English; of these translations that of Mr. Meltzer is, in my opinion, the one in spirit most allied to the original. The play has been performed in this country by German actors, including that ideal Rautendelein, Agnes Sorma, and it has been produced also under American management, with a cast to be sure which failed to catch the elfin airiness of the piece. At any rate, the story is so well known—even “Mr. Dooley” has made

capital out of it — that we may save ourselves the ungrateful task of turning at length so exquisitely dainty a composition into barren prose. About its symbolic meaning, however, something must be said.

The story, briefly retold, runs thus: A bell, intended to proclaim afar the praise of the Creator and the fame of its maker, falls down a steep bank and is lost in the mountain lake. The maker, heartsick because he has discovered that the bell is not the masterpiece it is thought to be by all the people, throws himself after his handiwork.

I fell. I know not how — I've told thee that —  
Whether the path gave way beneath my feet,  
Whether 't was willingly I fell, or no —  
God wot. Enough. I fell into the gulf.

But he does not perish. Half dead from the fall, he drags himself to a lonely hut. Here lives Granny Wittichen, a notorious witch, together with an elfin creature, the golden-haired Rauten-delein. With this girl, who is conceived as a personification of nature, Master Heinrich falls in love, and forsakes wife and children to dwell with her in the mountain wilds. There he sets

up his workshop. Among the great, free heights, with soul raised aloft by fresh incentive, he feels the access of new power to accomplish that which was denied him in the spiritual solitude down in the valley: he will work up into form a wondrous chime, —

Such as no minster in the world has seen.  
Loud and majestic is its mighty voice;  
Even as the thunders of a storm it sounds,  
Rolling and crashing o'er the meads in spring.  
Ay, in the tumult of its trumpet tones,  
All the church bells on earth it shall strike dumb.  
All shall be hushed, as through the sky it rings  
The glad new Gospel of the new-born light !

On this new gospel — a symbolic sun worship that shall absorb and humanize our religion — he addresses an ecstatic harangue to the vicar, who has come to reclaim Heinrich for his abandoned duty.

Eternal Sun ! Thy children and my children  
Know thee for Father and proclaim thy power.  
Thou, aided by the kind and gentle rain,  
Didst raise them from the dust and give them health !  
So now their joy triumphant they shall send  
Singing along thy clear, bright path to Heaven !  
And now, at last, like the gray wilderness  
That thou hast warmed, and mantled with thy green,

Me thou hast kindled into sacrifice !  
I offer thee myself, and all I am ! . . .  
O Day of Light — when from the marble halls  
Of my fair Temple the first waking peal  
Shall shake the skies — when, from the somber clouds  
That weighed upon us through the winter night,  
Rivers of jewels shall go rushing down  
Into a million hands outstretched to clutch !  
Then all who drooped, with sudden power inflamed,  
Shall bear their treasure homewards to their huts,  
There to unfurl, at last, the silken banners,  
Waiting — so long, so long — to be upraised,  
And, pilgrims of the Sun, draw near the feast !

. . . . .

O Father, that great Day ! . . . You know the tale  
Of the lost Prodigal ? . . . It is the Sun  
That bids his poor, lost children to the Feast.  
With rustling banners, see the swelling host  
Draw nearer, and still nearer to my Temple !  
And now the wondrous chime again rings out,  
Filling the air with such sweet, passionate sound  
As makes each breast to sob with rapturous pain.  
It sings a song, long lost and long forgotten,  
A song of home — a childlike song of Love,  
Born in the waters of some fairy well —  
Known to all mortals, and yet heard of none !  
And as it rises, softly first, and low,  
The nightingale and dove seem singing, too,  
And all the ice in every human breast

Is melted, and the hate, and pain, and woe,  
Stream out in tears.

. . . . .  
Then shall we all draw nearer to the Cross,  
And, still in tears, rejoice, until at last  
The dead Redeemer, by the Sun set free,  
His prisoned limbs shall stir from their long sleep,  
And, radiant with the joy of endless youth,  
Come down, himself a youth, into the May.

But Heinrich's fair dream is not realized, because he has not left his human conscience behind him in the valley. His faithlessness drives his loyal wife to suicide, — for Hauptmann's characters the natural escape from sorrow; a vision shows him his little children toiling up towards him with a jug containing the dead mother's tears. Master Heinrich's soul is harrowed by remorse; the man in him is broken, and with that the artist goes to pieces also. The sunken bell, touched by the dead wife's fingers, tolls a loud warning. Heinrich, wholly beside himself, curses and spurns poor Rautendelein, but soon discovers that he cannot do without her. To the life of the valley he cannot return; his forest temple goes up in flames. And so, without a home on the shining heights, without a home in the netherland, he must die.

That "The Sunken Bell" is the work of a real, whole-souled poet is certified by every line. A rare poetic temperament pulsates through every fiber of the whole composition. Poetically "The Sunken Bell" can hardly be praised too much. Its situations and characters are so entrancing, the language is so beautiful, that we may draw pure delight from each constituent part, even though we may not understand the allegory that is hidden in it.

As for the underlying tissue of personal experience, it is but thinly veiled. Yet a great many have enjoyed "The Sunken Bell" without going to the trouble of tracing out the resemblance of Master Heinrich the bell-founder to Master Gerhart the playwright. Nothing could better argue the intrinsic poetical value of the work.

We have so far spoken of "The Sunken Bell" as a poem, as a lyric effusion cast in dialogue, if such a description is admissible. Our praise cannot be equally unstinted when we view "The Sunken Bell" as a drama and a channel of philosophic thought. It is then that we miss, back of the lovely allegory, the clarified world-view of a ripened individuality. And such we have been taught by our great dramatists to expect.

The tragic fate of Master Heinrich would infallibly have appealed to us had the poet fully convinced us of his hero's overmanship. In that case Master Heinrich might have been reckoned among those brethren-in-fate of Faust whom we hesitate to judge according to the usual standards of human conduct. As it is, he is too small of stature to be compared with Faust, even though he does distantly resemble him. Faust triumphs because he *is* an overman, Heinrich perishes because he would like to be. He is a calamitous blend of the Titan's ambition and the weakling's lack of self-control, a hybrid between overman and decadent. His flight from the narrower circles of life looks suspiciously like an escapade. No lofty fellowship of spirit or congeniality of mind, no profound mutual comprehension joins Heinrich and Rautendelein by main force; nothing but a sensual attraction draws them together. And the sacred fires in Heinrich's new-built temple cannot long be kept glowing when fanned only by such a fickle breeze as his passion for Rautendelein. If the fate of Heinrich, the lesser mystic, fails to wring from us as much sympathy as we feel for the greater mystic, Faust, it is principally because

we ourselves are more nearly concerned in the fate of Faust. The great problems of life which he finally solves in spite of all hindrances are of universal human relevancy. The whole aim and endeavor of Hauptmann's hero, on the other hand, is centered exclusively on artistic ideals, to realize which he deserts his nearest obligations. In spite of all its beauties "The Sunken Bell," after all, does not appeal irresistibly to all our human nature at once, because it deals with human nature under exceptional aspects.

The enthusiastic acceptance of "The Sunken Bell" served as an unmistakable sign of the trend of the literary taste. For the poet himself as well as for the public it testified to the truth of the blunt saying in Paul Heyse's anti-naturalistic novel *Merlin*: "Though with the pitchfork of naturalism we may drive out never so vigorously that longing for the great and beautiful which is called idealism, it forever returns."

In determining Hauptmann's position in modern letters, this poetic achievement has advanced essentially its author's reputation and won for him many who formerly were averse or skeptical. By no means, however, does it raise him to the rank of the *facile princeps* among

living poets; for it is a distinguishing characteristic of the German mind that the mere sensuous beauty of an art work does not wholly satisfy it. The Germans want to look up to their great poets not only as to magicians who produce a transient semblance of the beautiful, but also as to teachers of wisdom and guides through the wildernesses and labyrinths of life. All present symptoms point strongly to the fact that they demand that their dramatists draw characters who, on the one hand, shall be perfectly true to life, but who also, in addition to their transient individual significance, shall have a universal, profound, close human relationship with us and thereby move us to such a personal participation in their fate as no mere stranger ever can compel on his own account. So far as we have made their acquaintance, Hauptmann's heroes are either — as Master Heinrich — symbols in human shape, in which case they lack the requisite red-blooded personality, or they are the superficial likenesses of men who are caught with astounding accuracy in their characteristics of attitude and speech, yet are without a lasting interest because the innermost secret of their identity with ourselves is not revealed.

After "The Sunken Bell" it seems as if our poet were conscious of the inadequacy of past efforts, and had at last found the road to a genuine realistic character drama. Certainly it can be only a hasty examination which finds in *Fuhrmann Henschel* ("Henschel the Teamster") (1898) nothing but a relapse of the successful *Märchendichter* into reluctant fidelity to his old love, Naturalism. In *Florian Geyer* Hauptmann had essayed the application of naturalism to historic drama. In *Fuhrmann Henschel* another experiment is made, in which the naturalistic impressionism is employed as an aid to the true function of the drama now apparently conceived as the revealment of the psychology not of a social throng, as in *Die Weber* and in *Geyer*, but of an individual. The transition from a physiologic to a psychologic type of impressionism is thus distinctly marked; a progress which, as has been well pointed out by the historian Karl Lamprecht, is in line with the general trend of modern literary development. Already from the middle of the nineties Hauptmann's plays had ceased to be regarded by ultra-naturalists like Holz as patterns and paradigms of their theory. Perhaps now, in the retrospection, we can better understand

the apparently saltatory progress of Hauptmann. That he had outgrown the obstructive ordinances of naturalism there can be no question. Yet he did not turn utter renegade, because he recognized the permanent gain accruing to the drama from the late reform; rather he sought to find a means by which, without sacrificing this gain, he might attain a less one-sided manifestation of his powers. In *Hannele*, as we have seen, the theme was chosen with singular felicity so as to permit the unmixed coexistence of the seamy and the dreamy worlds. In "The Sunken Bell" naturalism was pushed to the wall by the long-repressed *furor poeticus*. But Hauptmann is naturally unwilling to relinquish a method which furnishes the sole opportunity for one of the most potent elements in his genius, namely, his unexcelled power of observation and reproduction. The new peasant drama combines the physiological and the psychological methods. It retains all the external verisimilitude of "The Weavers," yet the interest is never, as there, focused on the environment, but on the *Auswicklung*, the unfolding of the central character.

*Fuhrmann Henschel* is a Silesian dialect drama, like *Die Weber*. The situations are very much like those in *Bahnwärter Thiel*. Henschel, a

rough, stupid, but well-meaning and deeply conscientious fellow, has solemnly promised his dying wife (in act i) that he will not marry Hanne Schäl, the house servant, of whom she is jealous. Having for domestic reasons broken his promise to the dead, the superstition preys on his mind that he is gradually being forfeited to her revenge. Meanwhile the wily, sensuous Hanne develops into a reckless village Messalina. With hardened villainy she practices one deception after another upon her hulking, good-natured husband, robbing him of his domestic happiness, his child, his honor, his prestige, his substance, and thus finally of reason and of life itself. The end (which is suicide) is thus brought on without the coöperation of the tragic guilt of the hero, formerly held to be one of the essentials of tragedy. In the story of *Fuhrmann Henschel* the realistic method is not employed with the unscrupulous thoroughness of former plays, so that, among other things, all ribaldry and nastiness are dispensed with; a single obscenity occurs. It is true that, for the purpose of making up a definite *milieu*, various supernumerary characters like Siebenhaar and Franziska Wermelskirch wander detachedly about in this play as in the earlier ones, but the figure of

Wilhelm Henschel is skillfully moved into the foreground and kept there throughout the five acts. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that Hauptmann has not fully risen above his limitations; for even Henschel's tragic fate seems painted al fresco and much of the psychological motiving is left to the onlooker. Besides, the plot is not fairly rounded out, since in the last act, when the will power of the hero is finally broken, the whole structure of the plot, unfinished as it is, collapses too, as though we had no interest in any one but Henschel. So much, however, we may regard as certain, without claiming an authoritative opinion, that this work of Hauptmann by the relative flawlessness of form and content marks a long stride forward in his artistic progress. At any rate, "Henschel the Teamster" must unquestionably be reckoned one of the greatest peasant tragedies ever written.

So numerous were the dramatizations of peasant life after *Fuhrmann Henschel* that it looked for a while as though the muse of the German drama were preparing to take up its permanent residence in the country. But she only wanted to recuperate from the strenuous exploitation of the metropolis; she was beginning to tire of the fad for the

tragedy of artist life which was gradually becoming a somewhat monotonous form of literary endeavor; and she sought invigoration from the fostering soil. The *Heimatkunst* — vernacular art — thus came to be highly prized, and its popularity was soon in its turn encompassed by the peril of faddish over-specialization. Fortunately, however, literary specialization means the accretion of many facts hitherto unavailable for a writer and thereby eventually a visible widening of his horizon.

The real poet once he is recognized should feel himself raised above the temptation of following a fashionable specialty, be it for the sake of bread, be it for the still more meretricious reason of popularity. Hauptmann's later works, too, bear witness to his greater independence, to his plucky determination to advance to his goals along self-chosen paths. And yet in spite of his increasing freedom from technical bigotry, one cannot always help feeling that up to this time the picture of the dying swan on the title-page of "The Sunken Bell" carries an ominous significance hardly intended by the poet.

Certainly the tramp-comedy *Schluck und Jau* (1900) does not lay claim to any special weight or relative value among the works of Hauptmann.

If his first sustained effort, the rhapsodic *Promethidenlos*, savored strongly of Byron, *Schluck und Jau* is frankly reminiscent of the Induction to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. But whereas there the sport with Christopher Sly ends at the opening of the real play, in Hauptmann's *Spiel zu Scherz und Schimpf* ("Play in Joke and Jollity") the incident throughout clusters round two drunken vagabonds whom the Prince's jovial friend in a waggish mood has carried into the hunting lodge.

It is natural to think that Hauptmann purposed to take up the psychologic experiment just where Shakespeare left off, that he imagined the inward experience of a pauper who, awaking from a drunken stupor, finds himself through some miracle in the possession of princely wealth, rank, and power. However, his play moves less by psychologic forces than by the comicality of the ensuing deception of Jau, to which his comrade Schluck is forced to contribute by masquerading as his princely spouse. Jau readily accepts the explanation that his former squalid estate was only a temporary delusion from which he has just recovered, but amid his new magnificence remaining unchanged, a vulgar, crapulous glutton, he furnishes

so much fun for his fancied "subjects" that the psychologic experiment is soon smothered in roaring comedy. Before long a pugnacious form of megalomania makes Jau unendurable and hastens the end of his glory. A sleeping-draught is administered and Jau removed to the lawn in front of the chateau where he was first picked up. His colleague Schluck has preceded him. In conclusion we are acquainted with the moral lesson of the play, which consists in a sententious truism about the inconstancy of fortune.

"The descendants of Alexander of Macedon became joiners and clerks in Rome. This bundle of patched homespun — but yesterday it paraded as a prince!" The prince and the pauper are equally strangers to the pomp and splendor through which they are ushered with different degrees of speed. The real value of a man is little more than that of Jau in his natural state. With such philosophy we are dismissed. It is not deep nor new, but the poet himself has warned us in the prologue not to take him too seriously:

Und nehmt dies derbe Stücklein nicht für mehr,  
Als einer unbesorgten Laune Kind.

And we may account for the "crude little piece" by Richard M. Meyer's conjecture that

Hauptmann belongs to those poets with whom recreation itself is turned into poetical product.

In *Schluck und Jau* Hauptmann approaches real comedy more than in any other work. The play is indeed documentary evidence of a "happy, careless mood." Such moods, with Hauptmann, are excessively rare. But genuine humor we miss even in *Schluck und Jau*. For genuine humor is the medium of an optimistic view of life, a medium by which all things are gilded or sublimated. To this poet whom the gods have otherwise endowed so richly, that one divine gift seems to have been denied, because he is at bottom a pessimist through whose mind the world is refracted as a confused and wrangling mass. All his works—the comedies not excepted—betray this pessimistic world-view which in the last analysis appears to be concomitant with the lack of a higher intellectual potency.

If it is a fact that *Michael Kramer* (1900) was written to give the lie to critics like Richard M. Meyer, who had said of Hauptmann that he lacked "the higher intellect, the mastery in the realm of ideas, the power to deal with the abstract, the quick flash that lights up the mystery

of things," he has only furnished his critics with an additional proof of their allegation.

In *Michael Kramer* (1900) the poet undertook a bold and thoroughly original task. In this play what is customarily regarded as the "action" is not worked out through the agency, nor even with the coöperation, of the real hero, — Michael Kramer is in no way the author of his son's tragic fate; such at least was the impression produced by the masterly *première* in Berlin. In fact the "action" is of a very indirect and subordinate importance; it serves merely as a psycho-dynamic means for drawing to the surface the inmost soul-life of the principal character, for carding out, as it were, his very heart and entrails. So far this is the most ambitious and possibly the most successful psychological study undertaken by Hauptmann.

Michael Kramer is the artist who just falls short of greatness, — a type nearly related to Master Heinrich and, less intimately, to Colleague Crampton, — a painter who has never won the prize of public favor because, on the one side, his high principles forbid him to prostitute his art, to debase it to unworthy purposes, and because, on the other side, his hand is no mate

for his inspiration, his brush no tool adequate to his artistic purpose, so that Kramer's best powers are hopelessly lost on that perplexing road that leads from the first conception to the finished work, and his best ideas never materialize on the canvas. As Heinrich is the man of the bell that is never to be cast, so is Kramer the man of the picture forever unpainted; but here the limit to a further comparison between the two seems to be set, for Kramer's manfully conscious persistence, even though it does not triumph, is a far more creditable form of endeavor than Heinrich's hysterical chase after phantoms.

Kramer is concisely described by his daughter Michalina: "Father is terribly honest." As Kramer belongs to the painters who heed not Goethe's caution, "*Bilde Künstler, rede nicht!*"—and has a pedagogue's habit of dwelling on his convictions, we learn from his own lips that unlike the moonstruck bell-founder he puts the main stress on *duty*: "*der Mann muß Pflichten erkennen, hör'n Se.*" He invests this *maxima regula* of his conduct with the emphasis of frequent reiteration. So he says to his disciple Lachmann: "Always work, work, Lachmann. We've got to work, you know, Lachmann. Else we molder

alive. Just look at such a life, how such a man works, such a Böcklin. That leads to something, there's something to show for that. Not only what he paints; the whole fellow. Work, you know, is life, Lachmann."

Michael Kramer has been called sib to Master Heinrich and Colleague Crampton, but that the kinship is not very close has also been stated. True, he belongs to a type that has necessarily the greatest fascination for a man like Hauptmann, who is in love with his art, — desperately in love, as we sometimes say, or better, as we should always say, sacredly in love with it. He typifies the incompleter, fractional, or merely potential artist — *der unganze Künstler*, I should say in German. But this man's failure has lost its sting. A life long he has striven without winning the prize, yet his loyalty has been rewarded. That divine spark which alone can engender the truly great in art is missing from his breast; but for the lack he is compensated by the stirrings of a serious and sober idealism. He is an unswerving advocate of the Joy of Working, and that makes him a great teacher. Whoever comes to him as a willing pupil is mysteriously transformed. "As a beggarly little fellow he arrives,"

says Lachmann, "and then suddenly receives the accolade."

It is clear that the tragic pathos in Kramer's fate cannot be grounded in his misfortune that as an artist he does not come up to his ideals. We have to look for it somewhere else. That *summum bonum* of the artist — natural genius — which the parent lacks, was given to the lucky child. If the son became the fulfillment of the father, then all was well. "Not I, — thought I to myself, — but you, you perhaps." Or, quite at the end, "I was the husk; there lies the kernel." And now having to see how the lazy rascal seals his conscience hermetically against father, mother, sister, and against every protest of his own artist nature, miserably frittering away his genius as a common pothouse loafer, is not the cruel shame of it enough to eat away the father's heart? That, then, is his tragedy. Not enough that fate has twice forced Michael Kramer to lay his artist's ambition in the grave; he must also say of the human being which is the dearest to him in the world, the dearest because Michael bows before his son's full-orbed genius as though it were the noblest part of his own self: "There is n't a good fiber in him. The boy is worm-eaten at the core.

A bad fellow. A low fellow." The history of art teaches that by some odd perversity genius sometimes travels in the same yoke with moral turpitude. Benvenuto Cellini was as eminent a black-guard and desperado as he was a carver and chaser; Master Veit Stoss was a notorious forger, branded as such by the public executioner. Yet though the secrets of the "split personality" of those men are not of necessary concern for us, we do expect some explanation for the natural wickedness of a leading character in a modern play of the realistic-psychological sort. Knowing that the author is fully informed regarding the provenience of his people and the ætiology of their physical and mental conditions, we confidently turn to him for enlightenment; but before the enigma of Arnold Kramer's character the most discerning reader stands in utter perplexity.

Morally he resembles in no respect either of his parents. His physical ugliness — he has inherited from his father a lean, lanky frame, lopsided shoulders, and a slightly humped back — might, at a pinch, account for Arnold's crabbedness; it offers no fit explanation for his boundless depravity. Possibly Hauptmann felt that under the circumstances he owed it to his hearers to describe this

freak of nature all the more minutely; he has decidedly overdone the thing, and yet it cannot be said that we learn more and more of young Kramer's character as the play progresses. In the first act, in his behavior towards his mother, he shows himself a brazen-faced, cowardly liar. The second act unrolls the character portrait of the father; no new light is shed on the extant picture of the son. And his physiognomy is so fixed that the third act, too, does not in any essential way alter its aspect. Nay, even when in the last act we see him safely confined and hear the touching obituary delivered by the agonized father, we are in danger of forgetting the *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. For Arnold Kramer is to the bitter end an incorrigible profligate; and the most that could be said in his favor would be in the nature of the cow-boy's epitaph, "He was a mighty bad fellow in some ways, but then — he was worse in others." In lieu of a real dramatic plot, a thin thread of incident binds together in the four acts of *Michael Kramer* the final chapter in the wasted life of Kramer junior. Arnold is enamored of a wayward damsel, who will none of him. Exasperated beyond endurance by a lucky rival, he threatens the latter's life. The

revolver is snatched from his hand; then Arnold runs away and drowns himself. When all is said, the unfortunate fact remains that young Kramer is the weirdly true representative of a species of degenerates who "happen" in well-regulated, nay by some irony of fate even in the "best" families. But I doubt sincerely whether the best possible performance of this play—and I believe I have seen just that—helps us to a deeper understanding of the type.

Architecturally *Michael Kramer* relapses from the greater structural consistency of *Fuhrmann Henschel*. The action is pushed forward jerkily over the insipid first act to the most telling part of the play; then after the appalling interview between father and son in which the second act ends, it sinks to the level of hopeless banality in the third act. With Arnold out of the way, a higher plane is reached in the fourth act, which is cast in a sort of disguised soliloquy. Lachmann is present on the scene, but plays no more active part than the interlocutor in a minstrel troupe. The thoughts uttered by Michael have a powerful, human charm, without, however, being either very new or remarkably profound. Wealth of ideas is certainly not a strong point of Hauptmann's art.

From this opinion we are not converted by the "thieves-comedy" *Der Biberpelz* ("The Beaver Coat") (1893) and its sequel or, better, companion piece, *Der rote Hahn* ("The Red Cock") (1901), both strict *milieu* plays and, therefore, somewhat in the same relation to *Schluck und Jau* as, say *Die Weber* to *Hannele*. Remarkable in both, particularly in "The Beaver Coat," is the sure seizure of the externals. The atmosphere of a particular locality, situated this time not in the author's home district but "somewhere in the vicinity of Berlin," is reproduced with a startling fidelity. Given such a performance as that in the Deutsches Theater at Berlin, where the intentions of the author are carried out under his personal supervision and with careful attention to the smallest detail, the illusion is well-nigh complete. *Der Biberpelz* has been compared by nearly all the critics to Heinrich von Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug*, one of the few great comedies of which the Germans may boast. I confess that beyond the fact that in both plays the plot is enacted in a court room, I can see no good reason for drawing an analogy. The character of the judge in both cases deviates widely from the accepted pattern, but Kleist's Judge Adam is an old rake and

arrant knave, a veritable stage villain, whereas *Amtsvorsteher* von Wehrhahn measures up to a fair enough moral standard. Moreover, in the older comedy the judge is the central figure, which is not the case in the newer. That distinction belongs to the washerwoman Wolff, a most interesting, double-dyed malefactress who commits her villainies under the very nose of the incredibly stupid magistrate and even gathers in official commendation from that innocent. Wehrhahn, though he occupies the second place, is drawn with infinite care, and while the remaining ten persons are only subsidiary, tireless and most successful labor has been spent on their characterization also; they all seem drawn direct from living models.

The action this time is rather more involute than we are accustomed to find it in Hauptmann's work, because the plot consists in a game of hide and seek. Still, of a story there is not much to tell. In the year 1887, during the *Septennatskampf* which turned on the peace strength of the army, the new *Amtsvorsteher*, or district judge, devotes the greater part of his energies to ferreting out and harassing those "internal enemies" who foment the war against the conserving forces of the fatherland. He cultivates a keen scent for

political offenders, to the great detriment of his efficiency as a magistrate. At this time a number of crimes against property are committed in the town. Frau Wolff, the chief culprit, in league with poachers and "fences," conducts a thriving business in contraband. One evening in company with her husband she steals a cord of firewood from the premises of a well-to-do citizen by the name of Krüger. On the following day the victim reports the theft, but Baron Wehrhahn does not show very deep interest in the affair, for just then he is on the trail of a case of leze majesty which absorbs him much more than the affair in hand. Krüger is not in his good books, anyway, as he has the reputation of being a socialist. At the present time he is in particularly bad odor on account of a suspicious inmate of his house, a Dr. Fleischer, who by the way is an absolutely harmless scholar seeking rest and health in the suburban quiet. The irascible old Krüger, whose temper explodes under the overbearance and prying inquisitiveness of the magistrate, flares up and roars out his anger at Baron Wehrhahn, the Baron roars in return, and the thieves go scot free. Later, Frau Wolff executes an order of her patron Wulkow for Krüger's fur overcoat and pockets

the handsome fee of fifty-nine thalers for the job. The third act in no way advances the action, but is devoted almost wholly to character treatment. The character of Frau Wolff is lighted up by a number of sympathetic touches, notably her love of children and motherliness towards the benevolent Dr. Fleischer. But her vicious traits also come out more strongly than ever before,—above all, her perfect art of dissimulation. Nothing could appear more sincere than her indignation at the light-fingered gentry, who should be cast out neck and crop, she says, else “they’ll steal the very roof from over one’s head.” The humor, we see, is all in the situation, not in the characters that are set off by it. A character like that of the Wolff woman is too repugnant to elicit laughter by itself. There is an analogy between the fourth and the second acts strong enough to make the play a little tedious towards the end in any rendering that is below the highest standard. In the fourth act the sagacious Wehrhahn presides in his office to receive information about the stolen fur, but again his thoughts are preoccupied with his imagined “sacred duty” to persecute with fire and sword the enemies of state and society. Adolf Bartels, the author of a book on Hauptmann, is

right in finding fault with Wehrhahn's incomprehensible stupidity. For one reason or another all parties needed for a full investigation are on the spot,—the plaintiff, the thief, the receiver of the stolen object, and an unimpeachable witness who has a clew to the whereabouts of the *corpus delicti*. The truth lies so close that this Prussian Solomon could not help rubbing his nose against it if he did not prefer to turn that useful organ aside and poke it into things that concern him not. The officialdom of modern Prussia is not free from its measure of human frailty; its most obvious fault is the *Strebertum*, that repulsive habit of keeping the eye peeled for the higher opportunity. This official toadyism Hauptmann undoubtedly meant to satirize in the figure of Wehrhahn, but he did so at too great a sacrifice of truth. Wehrhahn is not a sample of the Prussian police or judiciary, but its caricature. Anybody who has the slightest acquaintance with this highly efficient branch of the Prussian government will subscribe to Bartels' assertion that in a suburb of Berlin a blockhead like Wehrhahn could not hold his position for a single month; yet we find that gentleman in the undisturbed enjoyment of his emoluments a dozen years later.

*Der rote Hahn* ("The Red Cock")<sup>1</sup> (1901) is labeled a "tragi-comedy in four acts." The German repertory was practically without any specimens of this class of play when Friedrich Hebbel wrote "A Tragedy in Sicily" (1845). In Hebbel's rather insignificant play the tragi-comic element hinges on the notion of the guardians of law and order themselves turning criminals and then conspiring to make an innocent man suffer the penalty for the foul murder which they have committed. Hauptmann, we have seen, was several times attracted by tragi-comic motives: "In *Schluck und Jau* the victim is first roughly handled by fate and then mocked into the bargain. In *Colleague Crampton*, who first incurs and next by a stroke of luck escapes the consequences of his folly, we have likewise a tragi-comic hero. In *Der Biberpelz* a tragi-comic spectacle was furnished by the systematic defeat of justice through its appointed preservers. Of this genus *Der rote Hahn* is another specimen. It furnishes a continuation to *Der Biberpelz*, or rather another series of scenes culled from the same precincts.

<sup>1</sup> In German, "*jemandem den roten Hahn aufs Dach setzen*" means "to set a person's house on fire." The play in English might be named "The Fire Bugs."

Hauptmann in his infatuation with the principal characters of *Der Biberpelz* may have felt that he had not yet done them full justice or made the most of them. So he put them once more into dramatic commission. True children of Hauptmann that they are, time has wrought no perceptible change in them. Von Wehrhahn is still *Amtsvorsteher*, although his breast is now adorned with a badge of distinction; he is the same sturdy patriot as of old, still heart and soul in high politics, and as hot as ever after the social-democratic vermin. The admirable "Mutter Wolffen," too, is still at her post, alert and active in spite of her sixty years. Having buried her first husband, she has joined her fortunes to those of one Fielitz, who follows the double calling of a shoemaker and a police spy. His latter employment accounts for the *entente cordiale* which Wehrhahn keeps up with the noble couple. The theme and the groundwork of the tragi-comedy are the same as in its preceding companion piece. Again justice miscarries through the bungling political zeal of the incompetent Wehrhahn and the arch-knavery of Madame Wolff-Fielitz. While the magisterial eye is riveted on *die höchsten Jüiter der Nation*, its falcon glances are withdrawn

from the criminal doings in the immediate surroundings. Several fires have occurred, and it is an open secret that they have been laid by the owners for the sake of the insurance money. On the strength of a remark dropped by her son-in-law regarding the value of the Fielitz property as a site for a fine large house, Mother Fielitz has made up her mind to have a little fire of her own and works on and nags her faint-hearted husband till he consents to aid and abet the lucrative scheme. The couple contrive to be away from home on the day when the fire breaks out; the property is burnt to the ground (acts i and ii). The third act passes in the official quarters of Wehrhahn, who is in the act of examining a number of witnesses with reference to the fire. As usual his scent is sidetracked. The Fielitzes have not the least difficulty in hoodwinking him, and make him take up with eagerness the suggestion that the fire was the revenge of some political suspect against whom Fielitz had rendered service. A stronger clew, however, points to an imbecile lad whose father, although he happens to be in a position to indicate the guilty persons, is prevented by Wehrhahn from speaking his mind; the proceedings in the court room resemble

strongly those in *Der Biberpelz*. Hauptmann is apparently as much in love with the anomalous situation as a painter who repeatedly treats the same object. In the fourth act Mother Fielitz has attained her purpose, the new house is under roof, and after the German custom the event is celebrated with the so-called *Richtschmaus*. Again the heroine is shown from a better, human side, as was the case in the third act of *Der Biberpelz*. By way of a quasi rational sanction of her conduct she is permitted to set forth at some length her pessimistic world-view. Her death from heart failure, however surprising it must be to her physician as well as to the audience, puts an effectual though abrupt stop to the vivid scenes which of themselves tend to no truly dramatic close.

The conclusions drawn from the earlier works of the famous Silesian that he lacks keen penetration and cannot contribute to the world's stock of ideas are in no wise shaken by his latest productions.

*Der arme Heinrich* ("Poor Heinrich") (1902) deals with a German legend well known to English readers through "The Golden Legend" of Longfellow.

This time Hauptmann makes a vigorous attempt to expound in dramatic form the inner development of a human soul; but he succeeds only so far as he follows the lines laid down by his celebrated predecessor, Hartmann von Aue.

Hauptmann has chosen as a suitable vehicle of the romantic tale the iambic pentameter and has manifested in the somewhat conventional way, whereby the subject-matter is worked up in the five acts, a closer observance of the established routine. At first we find ourselves at the home of Gottfried, a tenant of the noble Count Heinrich von Aue. We make the acquaintance of the worthy farmer and his goodwife, and of their daughter Ottegebe, a girl just blooming into womanhood. Here Heinrich has decided to hide from the world the shameful malady with which, as a punishment for too great pride, he knows himself to be stricken. To the most loyal among his retainers, his kinsman Sir Hartmann von Aue,<sup>1</sup> Heinrich reveals his affliction in a scene of extraordinary dramatic power; Ottegebe has

<sup>1</sup> He is brought into the play by way of poetical tribute to the great mediæval epicist of that name who, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, wrote the novel in rimes entitled *Der arme Heinrich* upon which Hauptmann's work is based.

overheard him and, rushing forward in an ecstasy in which religious fervor and earthly love are insolubly welded, exclaims as she covers Heinrich's hands with frantic kisses:

“Lord ! my dear Lord ! think of the Lamb divine !

I know — I will it — I can bear the sins.

I've promised it ! And thou shalt be redeemed.”

The “little wife,” so Ottegebe has formerly been called in jest by Heinrich, has been told that there lives a great surgeon at Salerno who can cure lepers with the heart's blood of a pure maiden. She now longs to sacrifice her life in order that her beloved master may be freed from his curse. In Heinrich, meanwhile, the will to live wages a formidable combat with his manly conscience. He has left human habitations and lives like a brute in fields and woods. The hideous ravages of the disease, added to his savage neglect of his person, have made him terrible and loathsome to behold. But Ottegebe, nothing daunted, remains firm in her resolution. Spurned and insulted by Heinrich, she falls into melancholy and physical decline. Her parents confide her to the care of a pious hermit. Here Heinrich, at last succumbing to the demoralizing effect of

his misery, seeks her out, ready to follow whithersoever she lead.

*Heinrich.* Maid, thou art mine !

*Ottegebe.* I am the Lord's. No, no.

Woe me ! Ah come ! What say'st thou ?

*Heinrich.* For to me

Is measured out but so much life, no more,

As grants the hollow of thy blessed hand.

The fifth act takes place in Heinrich's ancestral castle, where preparations are made by Hartmann for a joyous reception. And now Heinrich returns, himself again in mind and body. He has been cured of the plague, not through the vicarious self-immolation of Ottegebe, but, on the contrary, just because in the supreme moment he found it in him to rise above his love of self, to prevent the sacrifice, and to accept his fate as an immutable decree of Providence. With this hard-earned submission to the power of God, Heinrich — Hauptmann's as well as Hartmann's — has won his deliverance from the judgment. And the end, too, is the same in both versions. Hartmann von Aue, in bold defiance of the strong caste spirit which dominates in the literature of the age of chivalry, marries Heinrich to his yeoman's daughter. In the play, also, the wedding

bells are sounded for the regenerate knight and his virgin redeemer. The legendary character of Ottegebe is not entirely preserved by Hauptmann. As in *Hannele*, he does not hesitate to contaminate the young girl's saintliness with an erotic element, and by a mystic touch each of the conflicting emotions gains weight from the other. It may be questioned whether the poet has done wisely to superadd to the heavenly heroism and the sentimental love a suggestion of incipient sex-life. *Der arme Heinrich* has been called a mystery play of love; but in order that Ottegebe's pure soul should mirror forth, together with the love of God, the saving grace of human affection, it was hardly necessary that she should have been depicted as a young flagellant vigorously plying the scourge on her body to suppress satanic temptations. True it is that Hauptmann has been able perfectly to reconcile this premature manifestation of sensuality with absolute modesty and saintly chastity. Nevertheless the eternally-and-spiritually-feminine by which Heinrich von Aue was drawn onward to a saving conversion did not require the admixture of physiological motives. But it may be that it has heightened the "secessionist" nimbus which

hovers round Ottegebe and a few other women in Hauptmann's plays, notably the Princess Sidsilill in *Schluck und Jan*.

Still another difference between the two versions deserves to be noted. In the Middle-High-German story the horrors of the *miselsuht* with which the hero is afflicted are nowhere described with vivid detail. It is enough that the misery to which Heinrich is reduced is contrasted in a general way with his rank and wealth. It remained for Gerhart Hauptmann, after the moderns had bodied forth on the stage with such great gusto a variety of inherited diseases, to present a true or, at any rate, a sickening stage-view of leprosy. So, as in *Hannele*, the crass realism of one portion of the play contrasts with the poetic romanticism of the other; the conflict seems far greater, as the metrical uniformity of the plan makes no allowance for the discrepancy and the work is pitched to a high average level of poetic dignity. Would not the author have done better to let us behold the physical misery of Heinrich through a veil, as it were, instead of outraging our sensibilities by uncalled-for explicitness? His occasional independence of naturalism has already been pointed out in this

chapter; and in the present instance one is led to regret that Heinrich is not treated with as much reserve as Ottegebe. Although *Der arme Heinrich* contains many single passages aglow with wondrous poetic beauty, yet it is not, as a whole, up to the standard of Hauptmann's chief poetic efforts.

Hauptmann has named his latest five-act play, *Rose Bernd* (1903), a *Schauspiel*; a designation which under the customary classification pertains to a serious play with a tragic tendency but a non-fatal ending. The difference, if it could be applied to *Rose Bernd*, would be at most purely superficial. The name, in fact, does not signify.<sup>1</sup>

*Rose Bernd* is a tragedy in every sense except that the heroine is withdrawn from our view this side of her last extremity. Not that the author shrank from the issue. Were we to behold Rose the infanticide on her way to the place of execution, or were we harrowed by her ravings in the violent ward of a madhouse, the tragedy would not be more complete than it is.

<sup>1</sup> Hauptmann, with many modern dramatists, uses great freedom in the descriptive subtitles of his plays. *Die Weber* he calls a *Schauspiel*, *Vor Sonnenaufgang* a *soziales Drama*, *Einsame Menschen* simply a *Drama*, etc.

For the exhibition of Rose's soul-life for which alone the author had care, the above-mentioned exciting finales are unnecessary. And perhaps Hauptmann has never before rounded out the portrait of a human soul in such surely drawn lines; certainly not since *Fuhrmann Henschel*. Like *Die Weber*, *Hannele*, *Michael Kramer*, in fact, like all Hauptmann's plays, *Rose Bernd* is an outflow of his deep human commiseration.

The story is as sad as it is short and common. Flamm, mayor of the village, falls in love with his invalid wife's helper, a buxom, fine-looking, joyous-hearted peasant girl. Accidentally the relations between master and servant are discovered by Streckmann, a vain, unscrupulous woman-hunter, who puts the usual price on his silence. The girl refusing to comply is hounded by him and made to suffer unspeakably. Finally she is entrapped and outraged. Even then the persecution does not cease. Rose's father sues the scoundrel for slandering his daughter's character. Rose called upon to testify against Streckmann is ashamed to tell the truth and makes a false oath. Flamm, believing in Rose's bad conduct with other men, generously acquits himself of the blame for her ruin; his wife, who has

nobly stood by Rose, now also weakens in her sympathy. At last Rose Bernd breaks down under the terrible strain of so many sorrows. In a lonely field she gives birth to a child which in her frenzied anguish she strangles. Then she is arrested. At this point the play leaves off; wisely, for the verdict of legal justice would necessarily carry a dissonance into our mood, attuned as nearly to pure compassion as that of Rose's deeply devout betrothed from whom the revelation of her deed wrings the pitying final words of the play: *Das Mädel—was muß die gelitten han!* ("The lass—how she must have suffered!")

However much one is impressed by this last effort of Hauptmann, yet it is not the work of transcendent dramatic merit which his countless admirers have been expecting from him year after year, to be disappointed again and again. The excellences of Hauptmann's later plays do not wholly compensate for certain inherent defects which make it look as though he were debarred by his make-up from the achievement of unqualifiedly great works. He is not destined, apparently, to be the Messiah of the German stage.

Hauptmann's literary characteristics have been fully treated in the beginning of this chapter; it is therefore not necessary to revert to a discussion either of his powers or of his failings. All in all, though disinclined to join in the song of boundless praise that is raised to Gerhart Hauptmann by a many-voiced and ever-swelling chorus, we gladly honor him in spite of his limitations as one of the greatest poets of his time and country. Lest our position towards his work should have seemed at all lacking in the reverence justly due to a writer of his rank and sincerity, we want to repeat the belief, set forth in an early portion of this chapter, that Hauptmann in cultivating the drama to the exclusion of every other literary form lets the richest acres of his genius lie fallow, and we plead, in extenuation of the critical attitude taken, a certain resentful sense of disappointment. Nietzsche once said of Wagner: "I believe it often happens that artists do not realize what they are best able to do because they are too vain." One cannot help pointing the aphorism at Hauptmann. He is at his happiest when letting his emotional nature break out into poetic strains. He could be the prince among modern lyristes if he would. That is why we

clamor for songs from him — he gives us nothing but dramas.

On the other hand, if from the world of hopes and ideals we turn our eyes to that of results and realities, we may well be proud of Gerhart Hauptmann. At the age of forty-two he has to his credit an imposing array of performances. His artistic creativeness is not past its heyday. A richer development may yet lie before him: a growth in character, intellect, and artistic ability. We have much reason to be grateful to him for what he has already given; and since ideal hopes will not be suppressed, who shall keep us from looking for still greater gifts?

[Hauptmann's latest play, *Elga*, appeared after the plates of this volume were ready for the press, so that it could not be included in the review.]

MODERN  
GERMAN LITERATURE  
WOMEN WRITERS



## WOMEN WRITERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

It is the prevailing practice of historians of German literature to maintain a somewhat rigid separation of sexes, in their classification of writers. There is thus some precedent for the not altogether philosophic procedure of the present paper, in segregating a number of writers by virtue of their sex for a separate critical treatment. In respect to quantity, the contribution made by women in the field of German letters in the nineteenth century is sufficiently enormous to justify such a segregation. And there is a certain continuity of development running through the whole of it which makes it well worth while to consider the *Frauenschriftstellerei* of the century by itself.

The general critical judgment passed upon the great bulk of it will not fall wide of this verdict: A startling absence of freshness and originality, counterbalanced in a measure by a great imitative faculty. Naturally we wonder where the cause of the limitation may lie. In Germany it may

be that absorption in domestic interests has been a chief cause for that fatal want of outlook and that seeming incapacity for the fullest self-expression which exclude the greater part of feminine fiction from the legitimate domain of letters. But are the arrested development of the artistic impulse and the atrophy of the higher intellectual powers really to be held alone responsible for the defective literary performance of the German woman? A glance at the writers of other countries gives rise to doubt. In England, George Eliot has remained the only great novelist. George Sand has been without a successor in France. And in the United States, where a well-organized woman-worship has fostered a greater independence, and where opportunities for education have certainly been ample, not a single work of art of the grander stamp has to this day emanated from woman. Whether, then, there be any nature-ordained limitations which deny to woman the gift of truly creative achievement is a matter regarding which, at the outset of this review, we may ask permission to keep our judgment in suspense.

The history of the literary activity of the German woman prior to the nineteenth century, when

she made her official bow in polite literature, can be gathered only by indirection, namely, by ascertaining the extent of her influence over literary art. Beyond a doubt there always has existed, under some guise or other, a measure of feminine control over letters. For instance, in both classic periods women were a dominant force: *Minnedienst* (the "service of the lady") is the mainspring of nearly all German lyrics to the end of the thirteenth century; and even the great epic writers of the Hohenstaufen era are exponents of the chivalric code of love; notably does *Tristan und Isolde* breathe its spirit.

Sterner and less romantic times put an end to this feminine influence of the golden age. It reappeared in a more rational form in the course of the eighteenth century. Womankind has an unassailable title to our gratitude because of the fact that the discreet censorship which imposed upon the maturer works of our classic writers their wonderful artistic reserve lay in the hands of women. The feminine influence it is that lay also at the root of ideal conceptions like Iphigenie, Leonore, Dorothea, Johanna. The women of Weimar and Jena, and elsewhere too, represented an extraordinarily fine culture of mind and

taste. The copious volumes of correspondence of the closing eighteenth and the opening nineteenth century, which are among the most genuine human documents of times intellectually so much alive, disprove finally the self-satisfied allegation that the credit for the advanced literary culture of women belongs to the declining nineteenth century, and is mainly due to America.

But literary culture is not necessarily latent genius.

The imitative character of feminine authorship to which reference was made above is attested by the rush of feminine contributions to every variety of fiction, once its era has been fully ushered in. The misery of the woman of letters dearly loves company.

The performances of the female satellites of the classic writers need not be taken up in this place. A catalogue of empty names and titles would be the only yield. None of them has left an ineffaceable impression. Even the one hundred and twenty-five volumes of fiction by Henriette Hanke — who remembers the name? — are incased in solid, impenetrable oblivion. Perchance a passable poem here and there by Luise Brachmann, who leans hard upon the manly

shoulders of Schiller, survives. Suffice it to say, in order to gain a starting point, that about the beginning of the nineteenth century feminine fiction came into vogue. Almost immediately it divided into two sorts, between which we have to distinguish to this day. Crudely we may designate these classes as mere amusement novels and novels with a purpose, — a purpose which may be purely artistic, but is, as a rule, educational. It cannot, of course, be said that books of the former class disclaim all ethical tendency whatever. On the contrary, the authors champion the accepted maxims of respectable society and prepare them *in usum Delphini* or rather Delphinæ, since they purvey them to the *Backfisch* or *höhere Tochter*, the “young person” of Germany. It is fiction of this sort that has attached a rather odious sense to the word *Frauenchriftstellerei*. Not, indeed, on any moral grounds. For the somewhat sugary morality of the authoress of this class is unimpeachable, and the most exacting Sunday-school superintendent will cheerfully testify to the soundness of her religious convictions. Nor is a theory of life lacking, either. It conforms to that benedictory optimism of which Mr. Howells claims to have discovered the ordinary cause

in an uncommonly well-cooked dinner. Not a drop of bitterness ever makes its way from such a gentle heart to the pen. Bad people, to be sure, there be, presumably for the sake of variety in the color scheme of the universe, and things do have a way of sometimes going wrong. But the lady writer's unalterable forgivingness wears out the most unremitting persecutions of a hounding fate; and to have retribution meted out to him by this sweet soul, the villain must indulge in veritable antics of wickedness. She much more enjoys praying for him, and he, like Editha's improbable burglar, likes to have himself occasionally converted, for a spell. Yet one can ill afford simply to brush aside these "like-mother-used-to-make" novels, because a very large portion of our contemporary fiction, here as well as in Germany, is concocted after the same recipe, from the same mush and milk, and with the same well-greased kitchen utensils. Moreover, it is unfortunately to this class of books that Americans owe their supposed knowledge of the German woman. Externally she consists mainly of a pair of soulful blue eyes, a brace of uncommonly heavy flaxen tresses, a sweet smile, and a Gretchen bag. Her intellectual horizon is marked out

by her accomplishments. She reads and recites Schiller and the expurgated Heine — over her fine embroidery; she sings and plays — Schubert, Mendelssohn, and a family sort of Schumann; it remains to say that she knows French and English and is inordinately fond of the approved varieties of flowers. She is the famed angelic maid, the clinging damsel without a backbone whom, according to Helene Böhlau, the German loves so dearly. According to that writer she meets the world with naïvely astonished eyes, and on the whole manages to have an easy time of it, for a thousand knights-errant are dying to discover her and to make her — make them happy.

Yet in fairness to the Germans it must be said that women of a taller mental stature and a larger temperamental gamut have long ere yesterday stepped in front of this anæmic doll and cast eclipse upon her; and that as a novel-heroine she is now suffered to smirk and simper on the bookshelves of the penny circulating libraries in her own fatherland, or to be translated into English by Mrs. Caspar Wister.

Let us first turn our attention to the *Tendenzschriftstellerei* of women writers. Though exceedingly few women have excelled in literature

by easy mastery of the higher craftsmanship, by that power of intense concentration and seizure of human nature in which the great writer reveals himself, yet many have shown an uncommon intellectual force of the aggressive kind. On the whole, it may be averred without undue exaggeration that nearly all women who play a conspicuous rôle in German letters write in a reformatory frame of mind. And that in a great majority of cases the woman's cause is their chosen field of effort goes almost without saying. It is natural, also, that these spirited innovators come to the front mostly in periods of unrest, when fiction becomes the theater of a heated social warfare. At such times the vigilant woman of the pen contrives under cover of literary exertions to wrest from the turmoil a fresh morsel of liberty for her sex. This helps explain why even the female adherents of romanticism did not subscribe to the political and religious Toryism into which the movement issued. The emotional Bettina von Arnim exhibits much of the specifically romantic extravagance of sentiment; and in the greatest virtue of romanticism, the capacity for poetic experience, she also excels. Her more than half fictitious "Correspondence of Goethe

with a Child" is certainly one of the finest products of German romanticism. Yet in many of her political and religious views she is in full accord with "Young Germany." *Dies Buch gehört dem König* ("This Book is for the King") is a bold manifesto calling attention in a marked manner to the starving condition of the Silesian weavers<sup>1</sup> and blaming a great deal of needless human misery upon bureaucratic quackery.

The active period of Young Germany extended from the Paris July Revolution (1830) to the outbreak of the German Revolution of 1848. The momentous social forces that were enlisted in the onslaught of this school of writers against the castle of conservatism lent a practical significance to the cry for the "emancipation" of woman. The Young Germans, accepting the doctrines of the French socialists, and familiar with the writings of St. Simon and George Sand, which had shed a new light upon the civic relation of the sexes, first set up the audacious demand for civil marriage. It reverberates in all keys and modulations through the works of the women of Young Germany, from its sane and clear phrasings by Fanny Lewald to the more

<sup>1</sup> See p. 149 of this volume.

than indiscreet Utopianisms of the Free Love advocates. For soon not only the sacrament but also the civil institution of marriage was put in doubt; so that even radicals were frightened back by the meaning with which "emancipation," now the watchword for the final purpose of the feminine rebellion, was invested by extremists. We see, then, that towards the middle of the century which has been called a century of democracy, the rising sense of personality permitted the wildest anarchism to run riot within a regenerative scheme which was essentially collectivist; a phenomenon which makes us question whether socialism and individualism are not after all but emanations of one and the same fundamental impulse.

The uncontrolled vagaries of the fanatical emancipationist did much to alienate general sympathy from the rational aims of more clear-eyed leaders. The "advanced woman" of to-day, were she to study these feminine contributions of the Young German and the subsequent literatures, could not fail to be amazed at the modernness of the cures for the ailments of society that are advertised. Julie Burow, for example, urges every woman to adopt a trade or a profession for

the sake of material independence. And Luise Otto, the founder of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein* ("General Union of German Women") (1855), even advocates the organization of workingwomen of every grade through labor unions.

We may roughly classify the propagandist fiction of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period according to the great undercurrents that run through its social philosophy, the collectivist and the individualist; in a third class might be gathered the writings of the opposition, reactionary either from conviction or from inertia and indifference. But such a simple classification must confess itself far too crude to do more than draw attention to the most obvious distinctions.

The contrast between the main forces within the Young German school is tellingly exemplified in Ida Hahn-Hahn and Fanny Lewald. Their lives reach from the beginning of the century to the beginning of the new era in Germany. Fanny Lewald lived from 1811 to 1889. Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn was born in 1805 and died in 1880,—much too late for the good of her literary fame. She had a most tensely eccentric or *Byronesque* temperament, as they used to say

in the days of her prime. The experiences of her childhood, her matrimonial misfortunes, her conversion to Catholicism, her brief novitiate in a convent, and other romantic interludes show her personal career to have been so intimately connected with the fate of her heroines that Hahn-Hahn's novels may be considered as links in a long autobiographic chain. From the beginning — *Aus der Gesellschaft* ("From the Realm of Society") (1838) — she elected German high life as a congenial field, and by vouchsafing her readers the coveted peep into that glittering Vanity Fair she easily attained popularity. In reading Hahn-Hahn you are made to feel distinctly that you belong to the *misera plebs*. You have bought a ticket that admits to the gallery only, and are now looking down upon the dazzling assembly with all of a plebeian's delight. And as if to show you that your confidence was not misplaced, the noble Countess herself stands at the door below scrutinizing the arrivals and counting their quarterings. No hero passes muster before her unless he is at least a baron and can present himself in a cavalry uniform or in court attire. Commoner and civilian are admitted only upon absolute

proof of genius, which for the Countess seems to consist of an indefinite expansiveness. A genius, in Hahn-Hahn's estimation, is one whose soul is capable of "immensity." To everything that is plain, from clothes to character, the lady has an unconquerable aversion. Her faultlessly well-groomed men and her stupendously millinered women oscillate between ballroom and boudoir as the natural poles of mundane existence. Oddly enough, in this painted and perfumed world of the formalities, the most startlingly unconventional things continually do happen. The Countess revels in tragedies of the soul—as she understands them. To us of to-day Hahn-Hahn's people, fidgeting forever in their heart struggles, seem somewhat like fishes floundering on the hook, and we regard them without any real human pity. But her books have, in spite of their glaring paradoxes, which are aggravated by a want of the higher technical requisites, a certain fascination in that the morbid subjectivity of the hysterical authoress is astoundingly revealed amidst all the gorgeous trappings. By virtue of this frankness, and it alone, she is decidedly modern. Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn draws from life and goes to the mirror in quest of models. Heinrich Heine is

authority for the statement that the German authoress writes with only one eye on her page, since the other is fixed on some man. It will be seen that his criticism does not apply to the Countess Hahn-Hahn. Her heroines are all of them Countesses Ida Hahn-Hahn: gushing enthusiasts, doting but capricious lovers, fanatical devotees. They are drowned in a sea of emotional conflicts, and the Countess erects for each of them a tombstone with the epitaph: Genius did it. The modern reader, to be sure, will exculpate genius and lay the blame on an impish impulsiveness of temperament. An instance is the fate of "Faustine," the truest reflex of the authoress herself. Faustine tears her bleeding heart from the grasp of her first lover to pass it from hand to hand and finally, for a rest cure, to take it to a nunnery. Her pernicious life philosophy is contained in this rich epigram: "To love is to devote oneself to a single object; but why should that object always be the same?"

Hahn-Hahn, by the strongly individualistic tendency, foreshadows the *Herrenmoral* rampant in the literature of to-day. That is to say, she is a prophetess of "emancipation" for which the Young Germans, notably Gutzkow and Laube,

were striving; but the enlarged freedom is not offered to the men or women of ordinary caliber, the *Vielzuvielen* of Nietzsche. No; it is exclusively a prerogative of the exceptional person; or, in Stirner-Nietzschean phraseology, of *der Einzige* or *der Eigene*. Only — this is Hahn-Hahn's personal note — the exceptional man, the great personality, happens regularly to be an aristocrat.

Over against this unreasoned accentuation of aristocratic egotism may be placed the democratic altruism of Fanny Lewald. The sober qualities which make this bourgeoisie of Jewish extraction a potent educational factor in the *Frauenbewegung* (woman movement), render her distinctly unromantic and, it must be confessed, a trifle prosy. The motive power of her convincing eloquence is not a fiery temperament, but cool logic. She is clear and definite, always temperate, and severely judicial, hence the reforms which she advocates are within the bounds of reason. She ponders the same problems as Ida Hahn-Hahn, but with greater impartiality and depth. The tendency of her contemporaries to exempt the genius from the common moral obligations had a formidable opponent in Fanny Lewald.

She studied the much-discussed marriage question in such a fair and sober spirit that her novel *Eine Lebensfrage* ("A Question of Life") (1845), one of the earliest and most direct literary arguments in favor of divorce, commanded general attention and respect. Among the earlier champions of the "new woman," Fanny Lewald deserves the first place of honor. Her successful practical activities for the advancement of the cause of women were in full accord with her literary work.

It is only natural that the aims of the radical women should have stricken horror to pious Protestant souls like Marie Nathusius, the conservative and orthodox authoress of the *Tagebuch eines armen Fräuleins* ("Diary of a Poor Gentlewoman") (1853). This exquisitely "inward" book breathes wholly the humble spirit of obedience which would not meddle with the affairs of the world, believing them safe enough in the hand of Providence.

On the Catholic side the projects of Young Germany are viewed with even greater alarm, as, for instance, by Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (1797-1848), the most remarkable woman writer of her generation, and in the judgment of many

competent critics the foremost among all German poets of her sex. Droste's real strength, however, does not lie in the defense of her traditional ideals, of which, by the way, she regards George Sand as the arch enemy. On the contrary, the "purpose" in her books, springing from bigotry and a certain religious mysticism, overcasts her artistic clearness and is the very feature that forbids unqualified admiration. For the self-repression in Droste's works is much more than artistic restraint. The mistiness of the composition makes us conscious of her want of outlook. This limitation is compensated in Droste's novels by an uncompromising veracity and rare minuteness of observation, powers which qualified this daughter of the "red soil" of Westphalia to become our first great representative of "regional" art. Still greater is Droste in her lyrics. They are a fascinating blend of rugged strength of character and delicacy of perception, and reveal an amazing nature-sense which knows how to express the personality of the meanest object of nature. In reproducing her sensuous impressions of an ensemble such as a landscape, the poetess calls up in the reader novel experiences of nature, in which respect she may rightly be called an early

impressionist, a forerunner of such moderns as Gabriele d'Annunzio.

Likewise averse to the participation of women in public life is another powerful lyricist, the Viennese Betty Paoli (1815-1894). Her poetry betrays much more frankly than Droste's its motive power:

Ich bin nichts weiter als ein Herz,  
Das viel gelebt und viel gelitten.

She might have said *geliebt* instead of *gelebt*, and come nearer to the truth. In poems full of intense yet rather reflective passion she discountenances all feminine ambition; woman can find her only chance of happiness in love, self-effacing love. Nature has thus circumscribed her lot, but has at the same time endowed her with a power of blissful self-surrender far beyond any of which the coarser-grained organization of man is capable.

From these serious writers we must now turn aside for a moment to the two most prolific women writers of the entire nineteenth century, writers who manifest an attitude of unruffled placidity towards questions of ethical import, of which stoicism the last secret is stolid indifference.

Luise Mühlbach (1814-1873) stood quite apart from the triumphs and defeats of Young Germany, although she was married to a prominent member of that school. Seldom before the days of our now fortunately expiring craze for "historical" romance has the vogue of a writer so far outstripped his merits as was the case with Mühlbach. She was certainly not without considerable talent; but she was utterly devoid of artistic stability, and permitted her ruinously facile pen to run away with her literary conscience. Yet this ungoverned quill-driver had her most loyal readers amongst the cultured classes, because her novels were perfectly suited to the shallow taste for historical anecdote that prevailed for a long time after the revolution of 1848. As a matter of fact, her characters had as faint a resemblance to their originals as the mute procession men in a Shakespearean play bear to the figures they represent: they only paraded in their masks and clothes. Mühlbach's first phenomenal success in the field of historical romance was "Frederick the Great and his Court" (1854), a novel in thirteen interminable parts. After that, under the spur of increasing popularity, she averaged a baker's dozen of volumes a

year. The whole field of modern history was canvassed for its backstair gossip. There is hardly a famous personage of the eighteenth or nineteenth century up to Frederick III whom Mühlbach did not cut up and serve up in her literary kitchen. Under her real name (Frau Professor Mundt) she enjoyed in Berlin a reputation as a capital cook and saving housekeeper. But although her domestic economy extended also to her literary work and she spread her heroes thin enough so as to make them go the farther, yet before the hand of death stopped her pen, at the age of sixty, the limited supply had practically given out, and during her last years she was forced to rehash the old favorites.

Misfortune never comes single. Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer (1800-1868) is the Luise Mühlbach of the German drama. For a true dramatist she lacked the first and last requirement,—the power to grasp character; but she knew how to create an effective rôle. She could not invent a plot; but she had great constructive skill of a certain cheap kind, a perfect mastery of the claptrap of the stage, and absolute control over the facial muscles and tear ducts of the groundling. Her plays fairly drip with maudlin sentimentality.

Withal she was very enterprising. Were she writing in these days, Birch-Pfeiffer might justly assert her patent to one method of that singular manifestation of our democracy, the theatrical trust, for she dramatized every popular novel she could lay hands on. French and English writers, such as Dickens, Brontë, Victor Hugo, George Sand, Bulwer, George Eliot, and home novelists, as Auerbach, Spindler, and Schücking, were promiscuously prepared for the stage.

In dealing with these famous authoresses one lapses easily from that dignity which is somehow expected of the literary historian. In extenuation, the Horatian *Difficile est satiram non scribere* may be pleaded. At any rate, the sum total of the feminine fiction of the romantic and the Young German era, as well as of that immediately following, is ill calculated to convert the skeptic. We behold, on the one hand, an agitation which takes its cues from robust masculine minds and in the main retails the ideas of others to the sluggish comprehension of the public. This is done in most cases without much deference to the dictates of the æsthetic conscience. Nevertheless one significant change is wrought out by the feministic drift of this fiction, namely,

the gradual shifting of the center of interest from the hero to the heroine. Having her frequently exorbitant claims refused in the material world, woman transfers them to the realm of fiction. And so, without any great artistic meaning, the novels which women write and women read and in which women are the leading figures furnish an inventory of the feminine aspirations of the period. A great technical gain accrued to this class of books from the increasing power of character observation and growing zest for psychological inquiry. Little by little it came to be realized that the best judge of the moral organization of woman is woman herself, and when this recognition was eventually coupled with the analytic skill of to-day, then at last the conditions were ripe under which alone the German authoress was able to seize woman's life in its fullness.

Quite in contrast to the purpose novel stands the huge mass of mere amusement fiction, which has been characterized above.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the century its output is mainly regulated by the commercial law of demand and supply. By the middle of the century this kind of novel-writing, being then practically the one outlet for the "intellectual"

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 235-237.

ambition of women, had taken on the aspect of a teachable and learnable trade. Public taste had settled into a comfortable sameness, and from now on the technical accomplishments of the artisan novelists were quite equal to the claims made on their talents. The woods of fiction land were peopled by permanent and accommodating settlers. The intending authoress need only shake a tree and down came the baron or officer or professor or artist that was wanted, and the subsidiary characters were equally obliging in dropping down ready made and just as good as new. Even the plot and the diction were cut and dried. With the aid of the family magazines, among which *Die Gartenlaube* and *Über Land und Meer* marked the highest level tolerated by the "general reader," the conventionalized novel as well as the conventionalized lyric predominated throughout the third quarter of the nineteenth century in distressing uniformity. But we only have to think of such books as Winston Churchill's *The Crisis* in order to see what an astonishing success smiles frequently upon works of this order. As for the "tendency," it must not be supposed that the pastime fiction has n't any. We find it wholly concordant with the general way of thinking. The

great majority of these writings display a species of mild, dilute liberalism. For after the strenuous agitation set afloat by Young Germany had suffered shipwreck in the disaster of 1848, its smaller débris drifted peacefully on the shallow waters of amusement fiction. In this generation it was conceded that women should strive for freedom, but the extent or degree of this freedom was a matter of higgling dispute. So, for instance, the question was raised, What callings are suitable for a woman? And it is quite in harmony with the meaning art then had for a writer like Wilhelmine von Hillern, the daughter of Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer, to conclude that the laurels which grow on the tree of science are beyond the reach of woman, but that she may pluck her laurels lustily from the tree of art; as though excellence in art were less difficult to attain than distinction in science. The "liberalism" of the women novelists shows itself in their incessant war upon prejudices, but they select either such prejudices as no longer prevail, or those which it is safe enough to fight, and, as a rule, their heart is not in the battle. We have refrained from discussing specimens of the out-and-out amusement novel in the earlier half of the century. For the period that lies between

1848 and the great war of 1870 Luise Mühlbach was given as a type, although she made pretense to position as an "historical" novelist.

The paragon among German authoresses as they were about 1875 is E. Marlitt (her real name is Eugenie John), who illustrates better than she explains the prodigious popularity of a fiction which combined graceful entertainment with easy moralizings, and managed to win applause from the liberals without forfeiting the approval of the conservatives. *Goldelse*, *Reichsgräfin Gisela*, *Im Hause des Kommerzienrats*, *Das Geheimnis der alten Mamsell*, *Die zweite Frau*, *Das Heideprinzeßchen*,<sup>1</sup> and the other novels which have helped us to while away many and many a dreary hour under the unsuspecting eye of a drowsy teacher, are not without many prettinesses. Marlitt may justly be called an "accomplished" writer. She possesses the gift of narrative glib and voluble; her morals are delightful; she has a knack for the ready and seemingly natural solution of unsolvable problems; and, best of all, she never forgets her manners.

<sup>1</sup> The English titles given these books by Mrs. C. Wister are: "Gold Elsie," "Countess Gisela," "At the Councilor's," "The Old Mam'selle's Secret," "The Second Wife," "The Little Moorland Princess."

But even the naïvely admiring eyes of the voracious novel-reader cannot long remain shut against certain defects of Marlitt, though these may seem to him mere specks of imperfection. There is in her stories an engine-turned uniformity of plot and an unnecessarily harsh prejudice against common sense. The reason is not far to seek. Common sense, were it not resolutely suppressed as a factor in her plots, might make itself disagreeable by standing in the way of the all-is-well conclusion required by an exacting public. It is, accordingly, treated as a negligible quantity, and the director-generalship of human affairs in Marlitt's novels devolves upon the generous promptings of the human heart. Chief aid-de-camp to the noble heart is the irresistible attractiveness of all good people. Whereas in life victories are usually won through powerful exertion or strong-willed self-denial, in Marlitt the spring of personal magnetism is touched, the good heart does the rest, and stern truth may whistle for it. This successful method could not long remain Marlitt's secret. Once discovered, it was caught up by a swarm of busy imitators who learned the trick though they missed the grace, and to this day their widely ramified

sorority flourishes in all parts of the globe. But lest we be diverted too long from our subject, which is, after all, a literary one, let us dismiss the host of Marlitt's satellites with brevity. It is but fair, however, not to make this jejune and time-serving class too inclusive. E. Werner, for instance, deserves to be excepted. She adopted in a general way Marlitt's method of dyeing in fine colors. But as a writer she eventually surpassed her model, thanks to a greater breadth of horizon, warmth of conviction, and a certain trenchant critical faculty. Instead of limiting herself to the conventional assortment of heroes, she showed a kindly attachment for misfit individuals; this even betrayed her occasionally into representing an unmitigated crank as a hero. One might easily mention a number of other popular women novelists of the past generation who, like Werner, can lay claim to a high degree of skill and, without being in any sense great writers, wield a good and steady pen at the business. To name only a few, a commendable briskness of style marks the stories of Golo Raimund, Egon Fels, Emmy von Dincklage, and Claire von Glümer. Still more independently gifted are Sophie Junghans and Emilie Junker.

To none of these authors of the seventies, however, but perhaps to Luise von François, belongs the distinction of having contributed to the permanent fund of literature the first book of lasting worth. *Die letzte Reckenburgerin* ("The Last Lady of Reckenburg") presents with surprising realism a picture of patriarchal existence at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Despite its main shortcomings, which consist in a tendency to preach in season and out of season and the want of outlook so common in feminine fiction, *Die letzte Reckenburgerin* must be assigned a high place among German novels, not only by comparison with the average, but on account of its own unmistakable merit. It is the product of a penetrating, energetic, yet gentle and forgiving mind.

From now on women writers of real worth become much less rare.

An intellect of the same noble type as François' is revealed in the literary personality of Malwida von Meysenbug, whose three volumes of memoirs are replete with deepest human interest, since they are the record of a human soul that has ever aligned itself on the spiritual side

of life and has been very close to such eminent men of the age as Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche. Meysenbug and François belong to a group of authoresses who are deeply intellectual and who yet show themselves independent of the "cause," because to them the sole object worth striving for and the one on which they have steadily fixed their gaze, is the fuller development of the idealistic side of human nature.

A like educational aim, ever consistently idealistic, inspires the work of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, who, now in her seventy-fifth year, belongs on the whole to the older literary school, but has in some ways exercised great influence over the present generation of authoresses. She enjoyed a rather modest renown before the arrival of the new era, but once the amiable superficiality of Marlitt had begun to pall, Ebner-Eschenbach's depth of feeling was hailed as a welcome relief. She is now looked upon by some critics as the foremost novelist of Germany, and by general consent is recognized as one of the best short-story writers in the world.

Marlitt and her followers derived much public approbation from their "idealism." Marie von

Ebner-Eschenbach is an idealist of a much more substantial sort. She is deeply in earnest and permits herself no dalliance in philosophical problems that are beyond her depth. A rare gift of self-criticism is coupled in her with a freedom from prejudice that is almost startling in a member of the high aristocracy.<sup>1</sup> Inborn goodness and the large-mindedness bred of wisdom are the chief elements in the thinking and forgiving morality of her works. In her stories each individual is permitted to struggle in his own unhackneyed way with the problems that beset the path of life, but the course of fate is not deflected by any silly shrinking from an unhappy ending. The guiding hand of the authoress shows only in that the outcome invariably vindicates the higher ethics. That is because she herself stands unswervingly for the Hellenic and Goethean ideal of *Sophrosyne*. This philosophic temperance explains the full meaning of her trivial-sounding motto: *Gutsein ist Glück*. Such high personal qualities are only too apt to put the critic off his guard when it comes to judging the artist in the superior woman. It is at this point that many a thinking reader will feel

<sup>1</sup> By birth she is an Austrian countess.

constrained to part company with the chorus of eulogists. He will not deny at all that Ebner's writings mirror, as has been aptly said, "the conscience of a priestess and the heart of a mother." But he will often miss the distinctive art note. Ebner's composition is apt to be crude or labored; her diction is refractory; in nearly every story a didactic elevation of the voice disturbs the harmony; and as for her realism, it is wholesome and unstudied, but touched up too highly with romantic tints to be convincing. Yet she may claim for her eclecticism as much of truth as is obtained by the "naturalists," for her endeavor, so she tells us, is to reproduce convincingly what she alone has seen: "a noble feature in the face of the outcast, or a flash of genius in the dullard's eye." Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, to be a writer of the first order, lacks two essentials: a deeper sense of beauty and greater possibilities of temperament. But taken all in all, she is an eminent literary character with a forcible and steadfast individuality of her own.

François, Ebner-Eschenbach, and Meysenbug, although their writings derive their value in part from their pedagogical message, do not pay any particular attention to the woman movement,

which, as we saw, stirred so many minds to their depths towards the middle of the century and, after ebbing away in the sands of the later amusement fiction, was to leap forth with fierce vigor in the feminine writings of our own day. The lives and works of these authoresses reflect the waning light of a day aglow with the rich and mellow culture of the Goethean age. In connection with them should be mentioned Carmen Sylva, the Queen of Rumania. She combines the mature temperance of Eschenbach and Meysenbug with the greater intensity of the modern school. To a greater extent even than Marie von Ebner she is a reflective writer. Following W. Jordan's example, she boldly makes the modern scientific theory of the world the intellectual content of her work. As the result of earnest study of social and religious problems her stanch but by no means uncritical optimism stands on the lofty level of an ardent faith in natural evolution.

Having, after this hurried retrospect, now reached the threshold of the present era, we next pass on to a group of younger writers, real transition types that usher in a rather hysterical cultus of art and the artist.

Ada Christen, Ossip Schubin, and Maria Janitschek are all three Austrians, but though not untinged with the easy-going, sanguine temperament of the modern Phæaces, their conception of life, on the whole, is dismal enough to suit the most stringent pessimist. This fundamental dolefulness sounds most genuine in Ada Christen, the oldest of the trio. Of the same age with Carmen Sylva, she is grouped with younger writers because she has even more in common with them than the Queen of Rumania. Her impassioned verses in many respects remind one strongly of Betty Paoli, save that Christen's self-revelation is much more thoroughgoing: her poems conceal and disguise nothing. It is a far cry from the unreserved candor of her *Lieder einer Verlorenen* to the pathological "exhibitionism" of Marie Madeleine's *Auf Kypros* and the lyric confessions of Else Galen-Gube. And yet, for good or for evil, Ada Christen first broke the seven sacred seals and bared undivulged feminine secrets. This unrestricted subjectivity is, however, not the only quality which puts her in a class with the "moderns"; she belongs there likewise by her harrowing naturalism in depicting the proletarian *milieu*. This is

true both of her verses and her stories. Nevertheless, the famous Viennese humor does not fail her, and some of her homely good-natured stories of Viennese life are veritable cabinet pieces; for example, *Echte Wiener* ("True Children of Vienna"), the story of Waltz King Strauss' boyish infatuation for the mother of the authoress. Ada Christen fully appreciates the quick and lively freshness of Viennese life, yet she grasps the fact that at the root of its artistic *laissez faire* there lies the shallow self-indulgence of the philistine. And in some of her gloom-steeped stories she shows how the native joyousness of such people is overspread by darkening sorrow and finally put out by despair.

The earliest specimens of the work of Ossip Schubin (Lola Kirschner) were full with the promise of great things. They gave evidence of a strong though undisciplined native talent, uncommon dash, a quick power of observation, and showed a keen knowledge of two opposite worlds, high life and the peasantry, truly astonishing in a youthful person and an outsider to both. Ossip Schubin made her literary début at sixteen, and set out on her career with the cheering approval of George Sand and Ivan

Turgenieff. But as time went on and popularity gave her assurance, she seemed to neglect her further artistic education. At any rate she has yet to make good her extraordinary promise. Her present style of writing is calculated to strengthen rather than disarm the suspicion that Ossip Schubin bears some unfortunate affinity to Hahn-Hahn. Not alone in her controlling weakness for international high life; for she is, besides, self-conscious and given to mannerisms — take the polyglot titles of her books — and sensational effects. With the naturalist tendencies she is, on the whole, out of touch, although at the outset of her career she showed a strong leaning towards realism; and although herself quite outspoken in dealing with those subjects which were formerly tabooed in feminine fiction, she has no patience with the extent to which the ruling freedom of speech is made use of by the latest generation of women writers.

This brings me to a feature of the new feminine fiction which even here cannot go wholly unmentioned. The quality for which above all others the German reader was once accustomed to look in the works of women, namely, that maidenly modesty which for sweet souls like

Ottillie Wildermuth and the enterprising Elise Polko still proves such a sure pathfinder to the Christmas tree of the boarding-school miss, is no longer characteristic of the authoress. Extremes often meet. Our women novelists were at one time squeamish. They are now frank beyond the frankness of Amélie Rives-Chanler and Ella Wheeler Wilcox, frank to the very limits of brutality, nay, even to the extent of sometimes overstepping them.

The serious student of literature must not be prudish. But though callous to those transgressions which bring down upon many excellent books the condemnation of our public librarians, even he will be nonplused by the unbridled candor of Maria Janitschek. He will shrink from it only the more because it struts along in pontifical robes. Maria Janitschek came into prominent notice in the early eighties of the past century as one of the first exponents of "modernism." Her chief characteristic is an emotionalism strangely mixed of "mud and fire." On the one hand, she revels in erotic problems of the most *risqué* sort, dealing with them in a manner of the earth earthy. On the other hand, she is a fanatical votary of symbolism, with a passion for

all that is abstruse. Like very many modern German writers, she is also a priestess of the greatest mystification of the nineteenth century, the *Übermensch*-cult established by Friedrich Nietzsche.

The number of Schubin's and Janitschek's satellites is legion. Their names, however, are hardly ever heard out of Germany, except possibly that of Hermione von Preuschen, who may be known in this country, at least as a painter, for her "Mors Imperator" was a conspicuous exhibit in the Woman's Building at the Columbian Fair in Chicago. Her writings are as coquettishly mystical as her pictures.

The foregoing synopsis, aiming only at a suggestive and helpful classification, has assumed that a modicum of familiarity with a few of the more conspicuous writers who served as illustrative examples could be taken for granted. Many of their works are accessible in English translations. But now that the critic is at last led into the company of the German woman of letters of to-day, the widespread though unpardonable American ignorance of contemporary German literature confronts him as a serious difficulty; an ignorance which is doubly deplorable on its own account and on account of its

causes. This expression of regret does not imply that it is worth while for any one in these busy days to try to keep up with the entire literary production of two continents, with the British Isles thrown in. But a legitimate human interest attaches to whatever part of modern fiction is actually conjured up by the living forces of our time; especially to so much of it as reveals the passing attitude of one generation of men towards the basic principle of society,—the universal moral law. Whatever may otherwise be urged against the new novels and plays of continental Europe, it must be admitted that they have justified their claims on human sympathy by an astoundingly close touch with all sides of life. There is every reason in the world why the literature of to-day should reflect a greater wealth of experience and contain a fuller register of ideas than that of any former period, even though literature has been unable to keep step with the miraculous expansion of the practical activities. Indeed, when viewed from the culture-historic standpoint, the work of living German authoresses is thoroughly worthy of attention. However, there are very few subjects on which even the American woman, superior as she is

to her male compatriot in literary as well as in general culture, is so densely ignorant. The reasons are not far to seek. Notwithstanding her ample educational advantages, the American woman, as a rule, is a poor linguist. To enjoy a book or a play in the original, one must at least be beyond the need of continual reference to the dictionary. Yet there are many otherwise well-educated American women, perhaps just out of college to-day, who are unable to make out a fairly simple German or French text. This is to be lamented, even though the assertion of a living French critic, that to declare oneself unable to read German is to confess oneself at least twenty years behind the times in knowledge, is undoubtedly an exaggeration. Persons unfamiliar with German or French are very likely to invoke by way of excuse the whimsical saying of Emerson, that he would as soon swim across the Charles River to get to Boston, instead of crossing the bridge, as he would read a foreign original when he could obtain a translation. It may be said, in reply to the Concord sage, that it pays to learn swimming, even apart from the healthful excitement of the exercise. For there are some very wide rivers that are

spanned by too few bridges. Such an one is German literature. Now, it may be asked, how does it come that so few specimens of German "modernism" are made accessible to us through translation? Possibly the explanation lies in the nonconformity of these audacious Germans to our tacit exaction that foreign writers should pay court to our jejune nice, scrupulously conventionalized literary taste.

The most potent influence that is at work in the German literature of to-day partakes of the nature of a grimly resolute striving for the fullest individual freedom. The effect of the new rebellion sown by the daring genius of Nietzsche is clearly manifest in the turn taken by the plea, in fiction, for the woman cause. The rights of personality, which were formerly subordinated to considerations of the general welfare, are now loudly emphasized. The leading women emancipators of to-day extol the "creative" life above the life sanctioned by social agreement, and do not question the right of the individual to break through the accepted moral formulas. They utterly reject the gospel of patience, which women love so much to observe and still more to preach. And while the old accusations of

tyranny are still hurled against the ruling sex with the undiminished vigor of old, not a little criticism, intemperate and sometimes savage, is directed against the meek and stolid submissiveness of the women themselves. There is a degree of danger in this fanatical agitation for unchecked liberty, and it cannot be denied that such teaching may prove fatal to a few unsteady heads. There are two ways of dealing with such a situation. In this country, where literary fashions bow to the dictate of public opinion, we choose to suppress the dangerous doctrine by smothering its utterance in fine indignation. In Germany, on the other hand, the fullest discussion of heterodoxy is freely tolerated. The Germans realize that progress in culture can only spring from a soil constantly plowed up by controversy.

It seems to me, then, that we are committing a grievous error in denying a hearing to what the most capable women of Germany have to say on a subject which to them is of the greatest moment, even though we may feel that their zeal is greater than their insight. After all, the heroes and heroines of recent German fiction, for whom ruthless self-affirmation is claimed as

a special prerogative, are not of the common run of people, but of a class scarcely extant amongst us; they are nearly always artists. And surely we need have little apprehension lest our own types of the overman, the trust magnate and the political boss, catch the infection and apply their overgrown sense of individuality to a sphere other than the material. Candidly, so long as we admit to our homes the "yellow" daily, it is hypocrisy on our part to proscribe any seriously meant book or class of books in the name of public morals.

The literary era that dates from the early eighties of the past century and is commonly called "Youngest Germany" has been more fruitful of good than of evil. Whatever may be our judgment as regards its ethical merits, it has brought us a most gratifying progress in all technical respects. Though the successors of Marlitt in and out of the *Gartenlaube* still jog along imperturbably in the old ruts — St. Keyser, W. Heimbürg, D. von Spättgen, F. Kapff-Essenther, H. Schobert, *e tutte quante*,—yet even their banal plots with their never-failing happy dénouement have profited by the modern example. As for the writers of the new school, any fair-minded

person must admire in them a great strength of purpose and power of observation, a wider range of sentiment and opinion and a more piercing artistic vision than were given their predecessors. And while the modern woman of letters might perhaps resent this congratulation, there is cause for rejoicing in the fact that the gratifying literary improvement has gone hand in hand with the steady enlargement of woman's sphere and opportunities.

In unabated agitation of the woman cause, Gabriele Reuter and Helene Böhlau stand preëminent. Both strike out boldly for a fuller liberty, but they also seek to deepen the sense of woman towards her new obligations. Reuter's famous novel, *Aus guter Familie* ("Well Bred"), pleads in spirited fashion against coercion in every form whatsoever; by insinuation, the authoress includes marriage, an institution devised by the despotism of man and acquiesced in by the slavish cowardice of woman. The slender thread on which Gabriele Reuter strings her moralizings is the tragic story of Agathe Heidling, the daughter of an official. Like all girls of her class, she is brought up primarily to marry; failing to do this, she settles, after a brief rebellion, into a purposeless life at

the cost of her true personality, and, finally, of her reason. Incontestably, this book, of which the lesson is self-evident, has proved a powerful lever in the hands of the radical advocates of social reform. Its plea, as is the custom with such books, gained the day not so much by the persuasiveness of the argument as by virtue of its glittering eloquence. Few "novels of purpose," it should be borne in mind, do make their way by means of intrinsic worth; most derive success from vociferation.

Helene Böhlau is no less emphatic than Gabriele Reuter, but very much more forcible. She, too, enjoys writing "at the top of her lungs"; yet even though she has not held aloof from sensational exaggerations, — notably in *Das Recht der Mutter* ("The Mother's Right") and in *Halbtier* ("Half Beast"), — she is the greater artist of the two. Two entirely different groups of novels have come from her pen. The earlier ones, incited by a close touch with Goethean culture — Helene Böhlau grew up in Weimar — radiate a sunny humor, but bear not at all on vital issues. Later on, Nietzsche supersedes Goethe as Böhlau's lodestar. Henceforth she extols the new, intoxicating passion of life that makes a demigod of him who

will desert beaten paths and, with a new-won consciousness, gain the power of wresting joy from each phenomenon as it reveals itself anew. This sovereign power, to Nietzsche and his disciples, is the sublimated life which alone is worth living. An almost sacred wrath against the meager contentment of the female philistine as well as against the rapacity of her male tyrant burns in Böhlau's intemperate harangues. Forever she harps the plaint of *Iphigenie in Tauris*: *Der Frauen Zustand ist beklagenswert*. In *Adam und Eva* or *Halbtier* she maintains that woman such as she has become through the enforced disuse of her spiritual faculties is not yet a completed human being. This shows itself, among other ways, in her pitiable impotence when brought face to face with adversity. "If a beast were hunted as woman has been, it would develop a weapon — a horn perchance, or a venomous tooth. Not so woman. She has only grown tamer and tamer, disgustingly tame, and has become in the veriest sense a beast of burden. Her direst wants have been neglected. If she has obtained a small part of her rightful inheritance, she has done so with the cunning of a famished beast — by stealth and subterfuge." Every blow

prostrates her, leaving her unsustained by the consolations of the mind. Woman, according to Böhlau, is a human body which passes through life entirely unspiritualized. And that half of mankind which they call the gentler or weaker sex is, in truth, the robust, the coarsely materialistic, inimical perforce to all that is lofty or subtle in our existence.

Fortunately for woman, so Böhlau holds, her relentless persecutor, man, is singularly naïve in his judgment and not at all hard to suit. All that he expects of her is that she should make herself as nearly as possible like the ladies he admires on the front cover of the German family magazines. But the strong-minded Helene Böhlau scorns and hates the easily pleased despot and marks him with a fiery cross, by way of a warning to the sisterhood.

Aside perhaps from her faith in the possibilities of womankind, Helene Böhlau is a thoroughgoing disciple of Nietzsche. As such she sets her face against the prevailing mope-eyed conception of human destiny which takes the form of either complacent optimism or indolent pessimism. To her way of thinking, the culmination of the fuller life lies in its supreme moments, be they moments

of achievement or defeat. George Eliot once expresses a similar sentiment when, in *The Mill on the Floss*, she says of the heroine as she nears the climax of her fate: "Even the coming pain could not seem bitter—she was ready to welcome it as a part of life, for life at this moment seemed a keen, vibrating consciousness poised above pleasure or pain." And Ricarda Huch, in a poem, says to Life: *Denn du bist süß in deinen Bitternissen*. It is a maxim with Böhlau that every true personality contains the possibilities of a self-determination that should bring either crowning success or destruction, should lead either to unmingled happiness or—to pure unhappiness.

But —

Every deed of ours, no less than every sorrow,  
Impedes the onward march of life.  
Some alien substance more and more is cleaving  
To all the mind conceives of grand and fair.<sup>1</sup>

In the humdrum grind of our daily existence, which is bound sooner or later to shatter the exceptional individuality, the human tragedy is adulterated.

<sup>1</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, translation by Bayard Taylor.

It will be noted that the writings of Helene Böhlau, although she is a realist as regards the striking reproduction of the *milieu*, are steeped in the azure of idealism. Naturally enough she takes by preference artists for her heroes and, like a majority of the novelists of to-day, seeks her models in the "Athens on the Isar," the center of the "new art," Munich. This is true both of *Halbtier* and of her most important book, *Der Rangierbahnhof* ("The Switching Station"), certainly one of the greatest novels of recent times. The plot of this story, again, is made to subserve the writer's ethical creed. Its central figure, Olly, burns up with an inner fire which she cannot communicate to the surrounding world. Her family, including a well-meaning but commonplace and selfish husband, cannot understand her, and her inner self is, as it were, placed on an insulating stool; but at the last, when her wasted young life is fast slipping away, the companion soul of the great artist friend stands revealed before her and she dies contented. The resemblance of this story to that of Marie Bashkirtseff and Bastien-Lepage is unmistakable. Yet "The Switching Station," as may be inferred from the very title, should in the main be understood symbolically.

Many of our stanchest realists are to be found in the downright symbolist school. Strange as this fact may seem, there is assuredly nothing contrary either to nature or to art in a method whereby the externals are seized for the presentment of the larger truth. But symbolism somehow carries within it the germ of exaggeration. Even Ibsen, the master in combining the two methods, succumbs occasionally to the danger, and falls into an excessive symbolism, as, for instance, in "When We Dead Awake," where the principal characters are little more than allegories mounted on human legs. It is on these same shoals, too, that Böhlau's imposing art is more than once seen to founder.

Then, too, her artistic equipoise is disturbed by her strong desire to retaliate upon the enemy of her sex. Barring a few rather freakish overmen, all specimens of the masculine gender that appear in her late novels are either hopeless reprobates or invertebrate ninnies. The iniquity of man is concededly great and his villainy deep-dyed; when overdrawn by a feminist they border on the grotesque.

It may be pertinent in this place to call attention to a significant change wrought out in these

days: the feminine literature of to-day is an integral factor in the general intellectual life: it consequently shares in the literary evolution. Recent German fiction has emerged from the era of uncompromising realism with a zest for psychological inquiry, and in the natural order of things women become more deeply inquisitive about themselves. At the same time they realize more fully than before their special gift and superior aptitude for detailed observation, and to their minute and honest account of themselves we owe an enlarged knowledge of woman's character.<sup>1</sup> But in the reformatory zeal which impels our women writers to redress the wrongs of their sex, the great human problems under discussion do not receive sober study, and so we find that even a writer of Helene Böhlau's stature seems shut out from the loftier outlook from which the true poet views the eternal pantomime.

At the present moment the most conspicuous German authoress is undoubtedly Clara Viebig. She is the leading apostle of the anti-emancipation doctrine of Laura Marholm, — the doctrine that woman is but a fragmentary work of nature, and needs to be completed by the union with

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 60.

man. Yet in spite of this theory, Viebig exhibits in her style a rugged, virile strength. In her masterly village stories, *Kinder der Eifel* ("Children of the Eifel"), and in the grimly humorous novel *Das Weiberdorf* ("A Women's Village"), she uncurtains with a pitiless hand the brutalities of peasant life. *Das tägliche Brod* ("Daily Bread") is a deeply serious study of the servant problem under aspects which to Americans will seem stranger than fiction, they are so different from our own. "The Watch on the Rhine" is a veritable triumph of the *Heimatkunst* ("regional art") so assiduously cultivated by the Germans. The latest of Viebig's literary performances, the novels *Vom Müllerhannes* ("Jack the Miller") and *Das schlafende Heer* ("The Sleeping Army") and a dramatic suite entitled *Der Kampf um den Mann* ("The Fight for a Man")—all three published within the last two years—are keeping her prominently before the public.

Though overshadowed by Böhlau and Viebig, yet there are many other forceful writers in the younger generation, — women full of indomitable energy, deep convictions, in some cases equipped with a fine technical skill. Only a few of them can here be mentioned.

Anselm (Selma) Heine is, like Helene Böhlau, a realistic symbolist who likes to deal with problems from the artist's sphere. She teaches, among other things, that the higher individuality is put in jeopardy by a too congenial marriage.

With a telling protest against the ruling conventions are fraught the plays and stories of Anna Croissant-Rust and those of the unfortunate Juliana Déry, who sealed her dissension from the accepted social code with a tragic death. Emil Marriot (Emilie Mataja) varies the theme by tracing the real "soul" tragedies to religious conflicts. She is a devout Catholic, yet has a predilection for the very delicate subject of clerical love with which the consummate art of Paul Heyse has dealt in *Zwei Gefangene* ("Two Prisoners"). In the series of short stories, *Mit der Tonsur* ("Tonsured Heads"), the principal characters are priests who are unhappy through love. Perhaps the best thing she has written is the stirring prose threnody *Der Geistliche Tod* ("A Clerical Death").

Marie Eugenie delle Grazie is a poetess of unquestionable power, but lack of artistic discipline renders her unequal to the great tasks she elects. In her epos "Robespierre" — she is one

of the relatively few women who have attempted epic poetry—she demonstrates that even the most terrifying realism is not proof against the noisy sort of emotionalism.

Under her pseudonym of Leo Hildeck, Leonie Meyerhof has made a well-known name for herself. In *Wollen und Werden* ("Purpose and Achievement") the artist tragedy turns on the discrepancy between the creative impulse and the sustaining capacity for work. Hildeck is an enthusiastic Nietzschean, and the prototype of her *Feuersäule* ("The Pillar of Fire"), notwithstanding her express denial, can be none other than Max Stirner, the forestaller of Nietzsche. For her entirely un-German coldness, this writer compensates by a rare constructive skill.

Lou Andreas-Salomé, the biographer and one-time friend of the great poet-philosopher-madman, deals in a bold, broad manner with intricate psychological subjects, such as the baleful awakening from juvenile illusions, dwelling strongly on the necessity for deep religious sentiment.

The two most promising among the youngest set of German authoresses also follow undoubtedly in Nietzsche's footsteps. The youthful Sophie Hoechstetter is so deeply engrossed in

the propagation of the individualistic creed that she has taken no time to bestow great care on the form of her writings; so her rebel pen does not disdain the handy style and methods of the amusement novel, even though in the interpretation of the master Zarathustra she exhibits a greater freedom of thought than most other disciples.

An even more resolute agitator and by far a more convincing "realist" is Hans von Kahlenberg, whose real name is Helene von Montbart, a young woman belonging to the circles that are styled *Militäradel* ("military nobility"), and whose novels move accordingly in the higher strata of German life. It would not be easy to name a writer of either sex so entirely unsentimental as Hans von Kahlenberg, or one with a finer ear for the hollowness of "official morality" and a keener eye for the sores that eat their way through the German body social. Upon these cancerous spots she advances composedly with the surgeon's blade, which she wields in no gingerly way and without first administering anæsthetics. Though only in the early thirties, she is already a master of the naturalistic method. The crassness in the portrayal of her *milieu*

—e.g. *Die Familie Barchwitz* ("The Barchwitz Family"), *Die Sembritzkys* ("The Sembritzkys"), and other novels—may be easily condoned, in view of her deep sympathy with the sufferings of her people.

The enumeration of the authoresses of this combative Nietzschean sect might be continued to great length. The aim of this sketch, however, cannot be completeness, but at best an indication of salient traits, and enough has been said to substantiate the statement made before with regard to the predominant influence of Nietzsche on our feminine literature of dissent.

Two writers who represent the high-water mark of artistic achievement by German authoresses of the living generation have been reserved to the last. Neither can be classed as a Nietzschean of strict observance, and neither can be called a thoroughgoing realist, or a pedantic symbolist. But to elude classification is to give the sincerest proof of a self-dependent artistic personality. Isolde Kurz and Ricarda Huch come well up to the test. Not uninfluenced, certainly, by great models, but without looking right or left to schools and coteries, they have made their way to the front rank. They are

artists, first and last, who have learned to employ the technical acquisitions of the modern school for the presentment of facts under their eternal aspect.

Of the two, Isolde Kurz is perhaps the more versatile. She commands a style which is scarcely surpassed by Paul Heyse when at his best. Her poems, and in a still higher degree her short stories and satirical fairy tales, besides excelling in a chaste plastic beauty of language, win by their rich fund of ripe human wisdom and an irresistible humor, delightful even though spiced with cutting sarcasm, of which the reader himself is frequently made the mark. The extraordinary strength of Kurz's art lies in its burrowing psychology, by which the subtlest qualities and conditions of mind are brought to light. This rare power enables the writer to expose with sensuous truthfulness, "realistically" as it were, the world of the unreal. To quote an example, the story *Mittagsgespens*t ("A Midday Specter") reproduces with great vividness a weird daydream of a mediæval city in the full fierceness of its tempestuous life. Italian life, especially that of the Renaissance, has the same charm for Isolde Kurz that it exercised on her great teacher, Conrad

Ferdinand Meyer. Her most serious contributions to letters, besides a small volume of exquisite lyrics, are two collections of short stories: *Florentiner Novellen* ("Short Stories of Florence") and *Italienische Erzählungen* ("Italian Tales").

Of still greater artistic significance is the work of Ricarda Huch. It detracts in no wise from the marvelous originality of her art that it has been influenced by Gottfried Keller and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, and that it, too, has been electrified by a spark from Nietzsche's wayward genius. The last-mentioned influence is recognized in her favorite heroes. They are the *Lebenskünstler*, the past masters of the art of living, modern Renaissance men and women with a capacity for translating great emotions into action. Huch, at the age of thirty-eight, is the author of fifteen books comprising two metrical plays, two collections of critical essays, a historical study, a book of poems, and nine volumes of fiction. All of these are works of intrinsic value. Her chief title to fame, however, still reposes on *Erinnerungen von Ludolf Ursleu dem Jüngeren* ("Recollections of Ludolf Ursleu the Younger"), a book full of the indefinable charm exhaled only by what the French call *une œuvre de longue haleine*; one of

those rare books, that is to say, which draw the reader into the very mood in which they were conceived and sustain him in it. The novelist whose unerring art has given him supreme power of this sort is Thackeray. By virtue of their temperamental consistency, *Pendennis*, *Henry Esmond*, *The Newcomes*, are unsurpassable models. Du Maurier's *Trilby* owes its unquestionable value to close and successful study of those great models. Among living writers, Pierre Loti and Maurice Maeterlinck, by an almost hypnotic power, communicate to the reader their own minor-key temper of mind. Ricarda Huch attains similar effects without the aid of chiaroscuro. At least in *Ursleu* and *Aus der Triumphgasse* ("Stories from Triumph Lane") she draws in the broad light of her own day. As a rule, however, she makes the color perfection of her picture stand forth more distinctly by incasing it in an artistic frame of chaste design. It is no easy matter to adapt, as Huch has done, the style of an old chronicle to a recital of contemporaneous events. But Huch's vigorous art does not choose the line of least resistance. Altogether she compels the highest admiration for her firm conscientiousness in squaring herself with technical difficulties and exacting from

herself heroic tasks. It is characteristic, perhaps, that her most ambitious works are by far her best. Whereas the short stories fall appreciably below the high standard by which her superlative art deserves to be marked, her two master novels, by virtue of their flawless structure, excel even Keller's famous *Der grüne Heinrich* ("Green Henry") and take elevated rank with the lofty achievement of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's imperishable prose epics.

The "Memories of Ursleu" purports to be written in cloistered solitude by the sole representative of a headstrong race whose members, notwithstanding their imperious vital instincts, are doomed to self-destruction by their unbending will. In the unraveling of the plot a most skillful use is made of episode, for the double purpose of enlarging the historical vista and, at the same time, making the private tragedy stand out in bold relief against the general calamity. The action passes in the republic of Hamburg during the cholera epidemic of less than twenty years ago. The plague is not broadly pictured as in Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*; rather with the delicate discretion used by Boccaccio in the framing of the *Decamerone*. The "Band of the Holy Life," into which young

patricians of both sexes form themselves in order to vindicate amid the surrounding horrors of death the joy of living, serves as a symbol for the chief tenet in Ricarda Huch's philosophy: life is not worth living without the illusions; hence let us cling to the illusions. No need of saying that Ricarda Huch is not a "realist" in the pedantic acceptation of the term. Yet she knows well how to reproduce the *milieu* of the patrician life as well as—in *Aus der Triumphgasse*—of the slums; and she possesses the highest credential of her art—style. *Le style c'est*—this time—*la femme!* Huch's is a personality with apparently unlimited possibilities of inward experience and a coextensive power of articulation,—herself a member of the "Band of the Holy Life," with a passionate desire to taste of the choicest dishes at the banquet of life. *Unersättlich* ("Insatiable") is one of her finest poems which gives adequate expression to this longing.

Ganz mit Frühling und Sonnenstrahl,  
Klang und duftendem Blütenguß  
Mein verlangendes Herz einmal  
Füll' mir, seliger Überfluß!

Gib mir ewiger Jugend Glanz,  
Gib mir ewigen Lebens Kraft,

Gib im flüchtigen Studentanz  
Ewig wirkende Leidenschaft !

Aus dem Meere des Wissens laß  
Satt mich trinken in tiefem Zug !  
Gib von Liebe und gib von Haß  
Meiner Seele einmal genug.

With this cursory characterization of the most important German women writers of the hour this sketch may be concluded. It goes without saying that many deserving books have necessarily been left undiscussed, and that of many well-known authoresses even the names could not be mentioned. To furnish a handy reference catalogue was not the reviewer's ambition, and an appreciation of writers like Klaus Rittland, Hermine Villinger, Charlotte Niese, Elsbeth Meyer-Förster, Richard Nordmann, etc., or even the terse and forceful Ilse Frapan, would neither have affected the general estimate nor made a perceptible change in the line of development as traced. The same consideration justifies the omission of Bertha von Suttner's *Die Waffen nieder!* ("Down with Arms!"), which owes the international applause bestowed upon it solely to its humane sentiment. The book, it will be remembered, is a plea for general disarmament. Its literary value is slight. The

chronological limit of the theme precludes more than passing reference to the so-called "Vera" literature, which has rapidly crystallized round the recent anonymous diary of a young Viennese girl who announces herself in the title, *Eine für Viele* ("One for Many") as the spokeswoman of a numerous class; to the Baroness von Heyking's *Briefe, die ihn nicht erreichten* ("Letters that did not reach him"), and many other books. It may be of some interest to know that Ernst Georgy's *Die Berliner Range* ("The Berlin Hobbledehoy"), a phenomenally popular series of cheap-grade fun-books, comes from the pen of a woman.

The writers here considered have been, with very few exceptions, novelists. This is natural enough, since in the field of the prose epic, which throughout the nineteenth century has been the most diligently worked of all literary fields, the authoresses have, as a rule, exercised their talents. In the other literary genera they have produced relatively little that counts for much in the history of literature. Lyrists we have in plenty, and a number of them are worthy of praise, as, for instance, Anna Ritter, Agnes Miegel, Mia Holm, Alberta von Puttkamer, Thekla Lingen, etc. But, outside of the women lyrists who have been

discussed, it would be difficult to mention any whose verse rings full and true, and sounds the note of a deep poetic conscientiousness. Certainly we cannot pay this tribute to Johanna Ambrosius, about whose sympathetic songs so much ado has been made. She is a plain, sensible peasant woman whom Professor Weiss-Schrattenthal, the benevolent patron of aspiring authoresses, had the questionable taste to dress out as a species of German Sappho and to have presented to the public by her East Prussian countryman Sudermann. Thirty-six editions of her poems were exhausted in four years, yet even that phenomenal book-trade success will not keep her memory alive. Ambrosius has clearly been overrated. She has opened to view a soul-life of great depth, but of inconsiderable compass. And she is too well read in devotional books and family magazines to have preserved the refreshing spontaneity of a genuine singer of the people. Lyric qualities of a much higher order belong to Marie Madeleine, who is unfortunately the most brazenly unabashed of all modern verse writers.

In the province of the drama the successors of Birch-Pfeiffer have not made many brilliant conquests. Of living women dramatists, Elsa

Bernstein, who writes under the assumed name Ernst Rosmer, is the only one who has won real distinction. The singularly happy combination of realism and romanticism in her fairy piece, *Die Königskinder* ("The Royal Children") (1895), has done much to establish the reign of the *Märchendrama* ushered in by Hauptmann and Fulda.

On the whole, women have shown a certain ineptitude, or it may be only a reluctance, to essay literature under the restrictions of definite form, and have exhibited a leaning towards the less exacting prose narrative. And, as a class, women novelists have their pronounced failings. They are found lacking in the calm objectiveness that flows from historic consciousness, and in a well-balanced sense of personality. Likewise, we feel strongly, in their interpretation of detached facts of life, the absence of a controlling philosophy; simple truths they grasp quickly enough, but too readily erect them uncemented into a system.

I have not been able to speak of the German authoress of the nineteenth century with full-blown eulogy. However, the reader has not failed to observe in her story the marks of an up-grade movement calculated to disarm the

pessimist. It is certainly a fact from which women ambitious for their sex may derive much gratification, that one cannot name the foremost living writers of Germany without including several women.

And as for the vexed problem that springs into view every time the woman question comes up in literary criticism: Is woman excluded by natural limitations from the higher realms of creative art? I might answer: Ricarda Huch! . . . to be told, probably, that one swallow does not make a summer. So again, as at the outset, I ask permission to leave the question open. It was not the object of this sketch to prove a thesis, but rather to trace a development, and to describe the resultant situation.



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